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## ECUMENISM

### EDITORIAL

CHRIST AND CHRISTIANS: AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL THEME IN EPHREM

Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar

ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE MAR THOMA SYRIAN CHURCH

Rev. George Mathew

EXILE AND HOME COMING FOR THE ORIENTAL CATHOLICS IN INDIA

George Kaniarakath CMI

THOUGHTS ON ECUMENISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
SYRIAN ORTHODOX STAND POINT

Rev. Dr. Adai Jacob

DOCUMENTATIONS

BOOK REVIEWS, NEWS



# CHRISTIAN ORIENT

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Theological Thinking

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## ECUMENISM

### CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Editorial</b>	161
Christ and Christians: An Ecclesiological Theme in Ephrem	163
- Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar	
Ecumenical Involvement of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church	170
- Rev. George Mathew	
Exile and Home-Coming for the Oriental Catholics in India	181
- George Kaniarakath CMI	
Thoughts on Ecumenism with Special Reference to Syrian	185
Orthodox Stand Point	
- Rev. Dr. Adai Jacob	
Documentations	191
Book Reviews	199
News	203

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## Editorial

One of the specific aims of the Christian Orient is to prepare the path for genuine theological discussion between the various Churches. After the second Vatican council there is a renewed and advanced movement in a sober and serious manner in this field of ecumenism. Among the Churches there is a self critical and self corrective approach towards their own theological positions. The divided state of the present christianity is unable to manifest the profound meaning of the catholicity of the one Church of God in its profundity. The unity and catholicity of the Church are to be seen in a perichoretic perspective. One is not without the other. The more the Churches are united the more catholic they become. In this century almost all the Churches are trying to recapture and reestablish their proper identity and thereby to go back to their common sources. Thus ecumenism has become the task of theology today.

This issue of 'Christian Orient' on ecumenism gives four theologically saturated studies as models of ecumenism. All of them bring forth authoritatively and conclusively certain ecclesial positions and ecumenical principles that could serve ecumenism and dialogue in various capacities. These articles are historical, theological and biblical. They are discursive and scholarly studies on various aspects of ecclesial unity.

The first article, Christ and Christians: An Ecclesiological Theme in Ephrem by Koonammakal Thoma Kathanar, is a masterful and thoroughly theological presentation of the reality of the unity of the Church in St Ephrem, the ecumenical doctor of the Church. This article highlights the Christological dimension as well as the baptismal foundation of ecclesiology. Thus it is centred on the two central themes of syriac ecclesiology, i. e. Christ and Baptism. This study brings out the fact that the divided church is a wounded body. Church is a weeping mother because of the divided children. This article is an invitation to understand and experience the oneness of the church in its purest form.

The second article, The Ecumenical Involvement of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church, by Rev. George Mathew, is a systematic exposition of the historical and theological aspects of the ecumenical life of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. This article gives a comprehensive view of the ecumenical involvement of this church with the various other churches. The author is very keen on maintaining the autonomous and oriental character of this church while involving in dialogue and reform. He firmly establishes that only by keeping the individuality and identity can we enter into proper dialogue and relationship with others. 'The bridge making' character of this Church is also taken into consideration.



The third article, Exile and Home-Coming for the Oriental Catholics in India, is by Fr. George Kaniarakath. In this study he insists on the necessity of being rooted in one's own tradition. He bases systematically his position on the ecclesiology of communion of Vatican II and brings out the fact that an ecumenically oriented ecclesiology should give due respect to unity and diversity. He criticises the merely universalistic and monolithic ecclesial approach and strongly argues for an ecclesiological and theological home-coming rather than a territorial one.

The last article is an excellent approach to ecumenism in the Syrian Orthodox perspective by Dr. Adai Jacob, Principal of The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Seminary, Mulanthuruthy. In this study he makes a thorough exposition of ecumenism both in the theological and biblical perspective. He concentrates on the christocentric, pneumatocentric and theocentric character of the unity of the church. He opens the doors for the unity of the church in the cosmic level.

EDITOR

# Christ and Christians: An Ecclesiological Theme in Ephrem

## Introduction

Since Ephrem is the greatest poet and theologian for all interested in Christian Aramaic or Syriac branch of Christianity no conference is better suited than this one for exploring an ecumenical theme from Ephrem himself. The very name "St. Ephrem Ecumenical Research Institute" where all the seven Thomas Christian Syriac Churches are represented, justifies such an attempt.

Robert Murray has already explored Ephrem's profound interest in Church unity<sup>1</sup>. The Christological dimension of ecclesiology in fourth century Syriac theological literature is best presented by him<sup>2</sup>. Not to mention his epoch-making work in the Syriac ecclesiological field when that tradition was undivided<sup>3</sup>. In spite of such pioneering studies related to the Christian Aramaic ecclesiology there are new areas worth exploring. As regards the Syriac ecumenical ecclesiology is concerned it is an unfinished task and this paper is only an

attempt at introducing a hitherto unnoticed aspect of the ecumenical ecclesiology of Ephrem the ecumenical Doctor and common Father of the entire Syriac tradition.

## Church is Unity

Church is the House built upon the Rock (*kēphā*) that is Christ<sup>4</sup>. Church is a unity represented by the seamless tunic of Christ<sup>5</sup>. This imagery of Church unity we find a century before Ephrem, in Cyprian of Carthage (+258): "This sacrament of unity, this bond of concord inseparably cohering, is set forth where in the Gospel the coat of the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all divided nor cut, but is received as an entire garment, and is possessed as an uninjured and undivided robe by those who cast lots concerning Christ's garment, who should rather put on Christ...That coat bore with it an unity that came down from the top, that is, that came down from heaven and the Father, which was not to be at all rent by the receiver and the possessor, but without separation we obtain a

1. R. Murray, "St. Ephrem the Syrian on Church Unity", *ECQ* 15 (1963), pp. 164-176.
2. R. Murray, "The Rock and the House on the Rock. A chapter in the ecclesiological symbolism of Aphraates and Ephrem", *OCP* 30 (1964), pp. 315-362.
3. R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge rpt 1977).
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-238.
5. HdC 6:6; HcH 38:5.



whole and substantial entirety. He cannot possess the garment of Christ who parts and divides the Church of Christ"<sup>6</sup>. Thus the feature of unity belongs to the very nature of the Church.

According to Ephrem a divided Church is an 'wounded body'; some members are 'cut-off' and 'wounded' in every division<sup>7</sup>. It is only Christ the Physician who can repair and heal those cut off from the body which is Church<sup>8</sup>. The Church is in great grief because of its being wounded and also on account of its cut-off members<sup>9</sup>. So she is a 'weeping mother because of her divided children'<sup>10</sup>.

#### Sheep of Christ the Only Shepherd

Christ's sheep is branded with the name *Mšihāyē*. The name *Mšihā* is upon every member of His sheepfold and this serves as an identification mark. It is an indelible mark and seal put by the Good Shepherd. Wandering sheep were brought together into a single flock and fold by Christ. It is no more the common property of anyone else. But sometimes there are thieves and robbers who appear as heretics. They borrow ideas and sheep from fellow-heretics. Thus heresies spread like rabies. This sarcastic remark of Ephrem reflects the ecclesiastical situation in Edessa in 360s. There mad dogs are biting other dogs and madness is spreading without any proper cure. So Ephrem's prayer for the stray sheep is only this: Let the Good (Shepherd) bring them

back to His fold<sup>11</sup>. Here the term used is *dayre (h)* which means (His) enclosure for sheep; the same term was later used for a 'monastery' in the Syriac tradition<sup>12</sup>.

Heretics are always keen to call their followers with their own names. Even such stray sheep belong to Christ if they are Christians; if they do not carry the name of Christ they have nothing to do with Christ. The proof of sheep's belongingness to Christ is the name of Christ on the sheep: *Mšihāyē* belong to *Mšihā*.

When the sheep is led astray the name of Christ leaves them and hereafter they will degrade themselves from the level of wheat to that of useless weeds. Christ is the farmer whose Church is the field of wheat. But occasionally weeds appear amidst the wheat. Ephrem's typical term for every heretic is *zizānē*—weeds in the field of wheat<sup>13</sup>. Not only heretics but also their followers are weeds.

Coins from the royal mint are imprinted with the portrait of the king. But mere pieces of metal are no substitute for the royal coins. The royal image makes mere metal coins of the kingdom. Ordinary human beings are like gold. But in baptism *Mšihā* is imprinted upon them and they become *Mšihāyē* who belong to the Kingdom of God. That is why Ignatius of Antioch used to call Christians, 'fellow travellers, those who carry God, the Temple, Christ and holiness'.<sup>14</sup>

6. *De unitate ecclesiae* 7 = Ante-Nicene Fathers 5.

7. R. Murray, "St. Ephrem the Syrian on Church Unity" pp. 163-170.

8. CNis 26:3.

9. CNis 26:5-7.

10. R. Murray, "St. Ephrem the Syrian on Church Unity", pp. 172f.

11. HcH 22:4.

12. *Thes. Syr.* I, 850-857.

13. Mt 13:24-30.

14. Eph 9:2.



In HcH Ephrem is applying his theory of divine names in a concrete and contemporary ecclesiastical situation in Edessa. The sheep of Christ are distinguished by the appellation *Msihāyē* or Christians. All other groups who are claiming to be Christians contradict themselves by calling themselves by the name of one or another fellow human being. Heretics are called after their masters and not after Christ. Ephrem gives a long list of heretics such as, Valentinians, Quqites, Bardaisanites, Marcionites, Manichaeans, Arians, Aetians, Paulinians, Sabellians, Photinians, Borborians, Kathari, Audi-ans, Messalians, etc.<sup>15</sup>

When Ephrem came to Edessa in 363/64 as a refugee the mainstream Christians were called Palutians after the name of Palut. In HcH 22:5 we find the terms, *plat*, *Pālūtāyē*, *platan* and Ephrem is playing on the name of Palut. The situation in Edessa was a reflection of the ecclesiastical groupings in Corinth. Just like Paul Palut came to the rescue of the mainstream Church separating it from the different groupings. Palut is often described as the bishop who first led 'the orthodox' Christians against 'the heterodox',<sup>16</sup> certainly with the help of Antioch because Palut's episcopal consecration is associated with the See of Antioch.

The *Doctrine of Addai* does not give any doctrinal reason for Palut's Antiochean connection. But it is probable that different heretical sects had taken over all the episcopal sees in the Edessan region and Palut emerges to restore the 'orthodox' minority and seeks consecration from Antioch. This

might be the reason why the legends underlying the *Doctrine of Addai* neglected the 'un-orthodox' elements in the history of the churches in the Edessan region. Because of this new initiative by Palut the heretics were calling 'the orthodox' group under him 'Palutians', a name unacceptable and wrong in Ephrem's view. Ephrem's play on Palut's name in HcH 22:5-6 is indicating how real Christians 'slipped away' from heretics to join the fold of Christ. The name of *Msihā* is claimed by them and hence called *Msihāyē*. But if any Christian teacher adds falsehood to truth the name of *Msihā* deserts him; thus his followers have no claim to be called after Christ. Christ imprinted His living Name upon His followers in and through baptism. This imprint shows whose property they are. The criterion for detecting true teachers from false ones is this imprint of *Msihā*. The servants do not work in their own name; they work for their master's name.<sup>17</sup>

However, not everyone who makes  
disciples

Calls his disciples with his own  
name.

The apostles instructed the nations  
But none called them with his  
own name.

With that Name which He taught  
them

In that same Name he baptized  
them.

The same Name he caused them  
to worship.

15. HcH 22:3-7.

16. G. Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai* (London 1876), p. 50; see W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia 1979), pp. 17-24. Though Bauer's understanding of 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' is not fully acceptable, Palut's role in the mid-third century Edessan Church is clear.

17. HcH 23:3-10.



This same Name He gave to all.  
Blessed is He whose Name is  
worthy of all!

Let us indeed make it clear and simple  
So that it may be heard even by the  
deaf.

You, I make the mediator

You choose, O hearer!

What is more noble and praiseworthy,

That you should be called *Mšihāyā*

Or be designated Marcionite;

Should they call you Christian<sup>18</sup>

Or 'daisanite' weed?<sup>19</sup>

Blessed is He whom all long for!

Both when Bardaisan was not yet  
born

And Marcion was not renowned,  
Let us go back to the first  
(Christians)

Who are older than Marcion;

And let us see how they were  
designated,

Those first churches;

And let us be designated with  
that Name;

And let us put off and cast away  
the appellations,

The names which came afterwards.

Blessed is He who is handed down  
with His names!<sup>20</sup>

Ephrem is making clear the distinction between apostles and 'weeds'. The apostles do not give their names to Christ's flock whereas 'weeds' pass on their names to their followers whom they steal from among Christians. Apostles work for God's name where as 'weeds' propagate their own names. In fact the heretics are 'deceivers' because they appropriate God's branded flock<sup>21</sup>. For Ephrem the appellation of a heretic's name over a group who claim to be Christians is the clearest proof that they are not the real Christians who are branded with Christ's name and no other name. The followers of *Mšihā* are *Mšihāyē*. True teachers are like the apostles who worked for the name of Christ and not for their own names. Thus the name of Christ is the unifying factor and the distinguishing mark among all Christians.

In HcH 23:9 two terms - *Mšihāyē* and *Krestyānē* - apparently refer to Syriac and Greek speaking Christians. It is also possible that the term *Mšihāyē* was more popular among native Christians of Edessa at the time of Marcion (+c. 160) and Bardaisan (154-222). As Ephrem clearly indicates in HcH 23:10, he is drawing attention to the early appellation of the first Christians (of Edessa?) who lived before the birth of Bardaisan (A. D. 154) and before Marcion became famous (c. A. D. 144). In stanza 9 the parallels between *Mšihāyē* and *Marqyōnāyē*, *Krestyānē* and *Daiṣnāyā zizānā* may be another historical indication. Marcion<sup>22</sup> flourished before Bardaisan<sup>23</sup> and it is possible that by the mid-second century Marcionites had reached Edessa.

18. *krestyānā*.

19. *daiṣānāyā zizānā*.

20. HcH 23:6. 9-10, CSCO 169 Syr 76, pp. 88-89.

21. See Jn 10:1-16.

22. See J. Quasten, *Patrology* I, pp. 268-272.

23. H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Assen 1966), pp. 213-227.



Though we do not have definite historical evidence to show that *Mšihāyē* existed side by side with Marcionites in Edessa before the birth of Bardaisan, such a possibility remains. The parallel between *Krestyānē* and the Daisanite weed may be a similar indication that by Bardaisan's time the term *Krestyānē* came into popular use also among Syriac speaking Christians. According to Brock there is a similar situation in the Persian empire where the term *Krestyānē* came to be in use because of Shapur I's deportation of Greek-speaking Christians before the mid-third century<sup>24</sup>. It is probable that such a double appellation for Christians existed also in Edessa before the time of Palut because of the bilingual situation. After all *Mšihāyē* and *Krestyānē* are respectively the Syriac and Greek designations of the followers of Christ. But later on there is a struggle to shed the name Palutians because of Palut's apparent connection with Greek Antioch.

If the above-mentioned assumption is historically tenable one can easily understand the legends underlying the *Doctrine of Addai* deliberately trying to assert some orthodox and apostolic origin of Christianity in Edessa. In bilingual areas the new term *Krestyānē* became popular especially after Bardaisan and Palut; but in more rural areas the term *Mšihāyē* was continued even in Ephrem's life time. For Ephrem it is significant to show that the first Christians (of Edessa?) were called after *Mšihā* and not after any true apostle, let alone some false teacher like Marcion or Bardaisan. The

heretical teachers, as well as some Christians who are designated as weeds, came only afterwards. The name *Mšihāyē* is handed down by *Mšihā* through His apostles who laboured as servants for their Master's name. Is Ephrem speaking about *Mšihāyē* in general terms or is he referring back to the situation in Edessa before the emergence of Marcionites and Bardaisanites? It is most probable that in mid-second century Edessa there were orthodox Christians as well as Marcionites. Until Palut became bishop of the minority orthodox *Mšihāyē* the demarcation between 'orthodox' and 'heretic' was not very clear. The 'tradition' about the role of Palut in leading the orthodox group is known to Ephrem<sup>24</sup>. But Palut's apparent establishment of episcopal links with Antioch (and anachronistically even with Rome!)<sup>25</sup> as described in the *Doctrine of Addai* in fifth century can be a later accretion.

### The Baptismal Foundation of the Church

Christians have only one Master (*rabbā*) on earth who alone is the True Master<sup>26</sup>. The Church has only one Bridegroom and the apostles are only *mākōrē šarrirē* – the friends of the Bridegroom of the Church<sup>27</sup>. But the sheep of Christ at times attempted to 'sign' itself with the name of fellow human beings:

O the sheep that signed itself  
With the names of its fellow-  
servants!  
For the good servants feared and  
removed  
Their own names from the flock<sup>28</sup>.

24. HcH 22:5-6.

25. Serapion of Antioch (190-220) was already a bishop before Zephyrinus became bishop (199-217) of Rome. The latter is said to have consecrated the former!

26. HcH 24:2; cf. Mt 23:8.

27. Cf. 2 Cor 11:2.

28. *mar'ita*.



And with the sign of the Lord  
they signed it  
Blessed is He who signed it through  
His apostles.<sup>29</sup>

The use of the verb *ršm* thrice and the noun *rušmā* once in the above given stanza is an explicit reference to 'signing' at baptism which marks out Christ's sheep. This text has an important ecclesiological term hitherto unnoticed. It is *mar'ita*, a term which occurs in an ecclesiological sense in Acts 20:28, 29, 1 Cor 9:7, Heb 13:20 and 1Pet 5:2-3. The Greeks, the Persians and the Egyptians saw the greatness (*rabbūteh*) of the Teacher of Truth (*rabbā d-quštā*), the true and only Master. They left the names of their masters and gods and went after the name of Christ.<sup>30</sup> This is the story of pagans becoming Christians. Christ 'leads back the stray ones'.<sup>31</sup> He alone can rebuild the fence and assemble the sheep into a single flock.

The Bride of Christ is tarnished by the activity of heretics. She may become a prostitute, corrupt and wanton going after heretics. So zealous apostles 'cut away the names' other than that of Christ. The heretics are thieves (*gannābē*) who cut off the fence and drive the sheep away and brand it with their names.<sup>32</sup> The term *gannābē* we find in Jn 10:1, 10 (singular) and 8 (plural). But it is Christ who propped up the sheep with His adorable names.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to 'the herd of Bardaisan' (*šāhreh d-bardaišan*) and the sect of Mani-both of which are stolen lambs,<sup>34</sup> Ephrem speaks of the people who put on the 'beautiful name' of *Mšiḥā*.<sup>35</sup> The people belong to God<sup>16</sup> and God's name is on God's people. The heretical sects are designated after their founders; such a situation is called 'fornication'<sup>37</sup> in the typical OT tradition. The people of God is the Bride of God. The prophets and apostles are only *mākōrē* (suitors) and friends of God's congregation (*knuštā*).<sup>38</sup> They do not act or speak in their own names. Their faithfulness to God and their trustworthiness to God's congregation depend on their actions and speech in God's name. Thus for Ephrem 'the name' which is put on by the congregation as well as its leaders is the crucial mark of ownership by God.

Baptism 'in the name of Jesus' provides a distinguishing name, 'Christians' - a name that reveals the identity of their Shepherd 'Christ', a name that shows that they are not 'stolen' by others.<sup>39</sup> In HcH 56:6 Ephrem invites the 'stolen sheep' to come back to the real fold, and to reject the name of 'thieves' and to be called after the praiseworthy name of God. Thus the name of Christ which Christians put on is the continuation of the name of Creator towards His possessions (*qenyānāwy*). The relationship of divine love and divine owner-

29. HcH 24:4.

30. HcH 24:8.

31. HcH 24:8.

32. HcH 24:9-11.

33. HcH 24:10.

34. HcH 56:1.

35. HcH 56:2.

36. See Ex 5:1 which Ephrem alludes to in HcH 56:2.

37. See HcH 56:2-3.

38. See HcH 56:1-3.

39. HcH 56:5-7.



ship remains.<sup>40</sup> In order to understand Ephrem's theology of divine names his idea of created realities as God's 'possessions' is important.<sup>41</sup> At baptism the names are written in heaven, in the Book of Life;<sup>42</sup> the martyrs read their names from that book.<sup>43</sup> Names are not anything superficial, arbitrary or meaningless.<sup>44</sup> The 'beautiful name' of Jesus beautifies our name, by mixing that name with ours and this provides the exaltation of our low state.<sup>45</sup> This process is our divinization;<sup>46</sup> the salvific dimensions of Christ's many names are for ours. So Ephrem compares Christ (*Mšihā*) and oil (*mešhā*). The name *mešhā* is only a *rāzā* and shadow (*tellālā*) of the name *Mšihā*.<sup>47</sup> Here Ephrem is identifying the baptismal oil and Christ whose name is being put on by those who receive baptism. *Mešhā* was used as an external symbol for the inward working of *Mšihā*. Christ was depicted inwardly through anointing, and thus it is the name of Christ that works through 'oil' and through the anointed ones or *Mšihāyē*. The name *Mšihā* is transmitted through baptism. The names of the Holy Trinity become operative in *Mšihāyē* because of *Mšihā* at baptism.<sup>48</sup> At baptism the royal picture which was lost by the first Adam is re-depicted.<sup>49</sup>

Thus Christ has united all who are baptized into His name. Both the name of Christ and baptismal oil provide the name *Mšihāyē* for all the followers of *Mšihā*. Hence when we are not united it is a serious scandal. But the fact remains that when we are united we are divided; when we are divided we are united. There is no ontological division and it is only a matter of realizing the baptismal unity which is yet to be lived. If only we can accept the common baptismal foundation of our churches it would pave way for an ecumenical ecclesiology. Hence the relevance of what Ephrem wrote in the fourth century about the relation between *Mšihā* and *Mšihāyē*. It may be apt to conclude with Ephrem's prayer for unity:

Make peace, our Lord,  
In my days in Your churches  
Both unite and join, my Lord,  
The quarrelling sects  
Both pacify and reconcile too  
The conflicting sides  
And let there be  
One true Church from all churches  
And let her righteous children  
Be gathered in her bosom  
That we may confess Your grace  
Praises to Your reconciliation.<sup>50</sup>

Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar

40. See HcH 31:1-2 where Ephrem refutes the view of Marcion about an uncaring Stranger God.

41. In Ephrem the term *qenyānā* signifies the bond of relation between Creator and the created, Shepherd and his sheep.

42. HdE 9:onila.

43. HdE 8:6.

44. HdE 11:6-7, 4:18; HdV 7:1; HdF 80:10, etc.

45. HdE 21:4; HdF 12:20; see Beck's note in *CSCO* 155 *Syr* 74, p. 43n23.

46. S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Rome 1985), pp. 123-128.

47. HdV 4:8.

48. HdV 4:14; HdF 46:4, 51:7.

49. HdV 7:5; see P. Bruns, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats des Persischen Weisen* (Bonn 1990), pp. 161-166.

50. HdF 52:15, *CSCO* 154 *Syr* 73 (Louvain 1955), p. 164.

\* Paper read at SEERI, IJrd World Syriac Conference 4-10 September 1994.



# Ecumenical Involvement of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church

The Holy Spirit has led us to the vision that unity is the will of God and division is painful. When we go through history of Christian Churches, we see various schisms and divisions. Ultimately the goal of every church must be for unity in Christ. Church is church only when she is united. Ecumenical movements of this century are leading towards unity and healing from divisions. It is not possible for any church to keep aloof from the path of ecumenical movement. In this article we are trying to present the ecumenical involvement of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. The Mar Thoma Church has always been open to the cause of ecumenism. Here an attempt is being made to make historical evaluation of unity efforts initiated by the MTC with other churches. The church is in communion relationship with the Anglican church and World-wide Anglican communion. The MTC is also in full communion with the Church of South India, Church of North India through a Joint Council of three churches. Mar Thoma Church keeps a unique kind of communion relationship with the Malabar Independent Syrian Church which is also known as Thozhiyur Church. A dialogue with the Orthodox church is also progressing. The involvements like World Council of Churches are also briefly discussed. In the conclusion, the lessons of these unity efforts are mentioned with a view to challenge other churches who are also travelling

in to the goal Ecumenism. Before that we have to look at the history of the Mar Thoma Church for a better understanding of church union.

## A Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church

Until 19th century, the Non Roman Syrian Church shared a common heritage and history and it is not necessary here to elaborate that. During the second quarter of 19th century, a section of the Syrian Church in Malankara underwent certain degree of reformation through the influence of Anglican Missionaries who came from England. The Church Missionary Society (CMS), the missionary wing of the Anglican church, sent a Mission of Help to Malankara. In 1813, Pulikottil Mar Dionysius, the Malankara Metropolitan established a Seminary at Kottayam with the help of colonel Munro, the British Resident to train the clergy of the church. The missionaries translated the Bible into Malayalam. Later Rev. Abraham Malpan of Maraman and Rev. Geevarghese Malpan of Puthuppally were appointed as teachers of the seminary. Missionaries were also teaching in the Seminary. Both Malpans were attracted by the teachings of the missionaries and felt the need for a reformation in the Syrian Church. They translated the liturgy of the Holy Qurbana and revised it on the principles of reformation. In 1836



both of them celebrated the Holy Qurbana in their home parishes with the revised and translated liturgy.<sup>1</sup>

There were opposition from the Metropolitan. So Abraham Malpan sent his nephew, deacon Mathews to Mardin to the See of the Patriarch of Antioch. He was duly consecrated as priest and as Metran with the name Mathews Mar Athanasius. He came to Kochi in 1843. Chepat Mar Dionysius was the Metropolitan at that time. There were struggle for authority between the two bishops for ten years. In 1852 Mathews Mar Athanasius was confirmed by royal proclamation as the Metropolitan of Malankara. He gave leadership for the reformation in the Church holding the people together. Meanwhile those who opposed the reformation movement sent Rev. Joseph of Pulikkotil to Mardin and he was consecrated as Bishop Joseph Mar Dionysius. In 1868 Mar Athanasius consecrated his cousin and son of Abraham Malpan Rev. Thomas as Thomas Mar Athanasius Metropolitan. The royal proclamation given to Mathews Mar Athanasius was withdrawn and he died in 1877. Thomas Mar Athanasius succeeded him. There followed a series of court cases for the possession of Old Seminary, the Church property and the Trust Fund known as *Vattippanam*. Joseph Mar Dionysius claimed as the rightful Metropolitan and he opposed the reformation. After ten years of litigation from 1879-89, the reformed section lost the case. Thomas Mar Athanasius had to vacate the Old Seminary and other church properties.

Thus the undivided non Roman Church of Malankara was divided into Jacobite and Mar Thoma Churches respectively. Thomas Mar Athanasius gave leadership to the faithful who stood for the cause of reformation, built churches and organised the people. He passed away in 1893.

#### The Mar Thomas Church Today

It is stated in the declaration of the constitution of the Mar Thoma Church that the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church believed to have been founded by Saint Thomas one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world and known by the name of the Apostle, is part of the ONE HOLY CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC church.<sup>2</sup> The head of the church is known as the Mar Thoma Metropolitan. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma is the present head of the church. He is the '19th Mar Thoma' after the Coonen cross oath and the consecration of Mar Thoma I. There are, ten bishops including the Metropolitan, for the Mar Thoma Church. The Church is divided into 11 Dioceses. There are 610 priests and 965 churches and 9 Lakhs followers according to the church census held in 1993. Mar Thoma Church and the Ecumenical Movement<sup>3</sup>: Before we look into the relationship with other churches, it is necessary to mention the Ecumenical involvement of the Mar Thoma Church. Mar Thoma Syrian Church is a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) ever since its formation in 1948. Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan was one of the six presidents of WCC from 1954-61. Dr. M. M. Thomas, a

1. For detailed history of Mar Thoma Church see. Juhanon Mar Thoma 'Christianity in India' and a Brief History of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church Madras (1952).
2. The Constitution of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church Tiruvalla (1984) P. 1.
3. For the Ecumenical involvement of the MTC see 'The Relationship of MTC with other churches' in the Mar Thoma Syrian Church Directory, Tiruvalla (1983), pp - 116 - 125.



lay theologian of the Church was the Chairman of the Central Committee of WCC. Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma, late Thomas Mar Athanasius Suffragan Metropolitan, Prof. C. P. Mathew – were also members of Central Committee and Faith and Order Committee. At present Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilus is the member of both the Central and executive committees. Dr. Joseph Mar Iranicus and Rev. Dr. Eipe Joseph of the MTC are the president and General Secretary of the National Council of churches in India (NCCI). Mar Thoma Church takes part actively in the Kerala council of Churches (KCC) too. All these are pointed out to show how much the MTC is involved in the Ecumenical Movement both nationally and internationally.

Now we will look at the Church union efforts of MTC with individual Churches, at different levels. This century witnessed different levels of unity of the people of God. Two World Wars, liberation from the colonial powers, national awareness and self identity of people etc. contributed to Ecumenical thinking and church unity around the world. The formation of World Council of churches in 1948 and the Second Vatican Council also contributed towards growing unity among churches. The modern ecumenical movement can be described as the effort to liberate the separated churches from their isolation and to gather them to a living fellowship and they may appear as one people.

#### **Mar Thoma Church and Anglican Church**

The Syrian Church and the Anglican Church were in close contact

during the early part of the 19th century. After the Synod at Mavelikara in 1836, the Syrian Church severed its connection with the Anglican Missionaries because of several reasons. But those who stood for reforms in the church co-operated with them and finally an Anglican Diocese was formed in 1878. But the Mar Thoma Church did not desire to join the Anglican fold or to abandon Oriental worship forms or tradition. After consultation with the Travancore Cochin Diocese of the Anglican Church, the Mar Thoma Church entered into intercommunion in 1937. Later 1961 the MTC entered into communion with the Anglican Church which is known as Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon (CIPBC) based on the same principle.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Relation with Anglican Communion**

The unity and intercommunion relationship that has achieved with the Anglican Church of India, paved the way for establishing communion relation with the World wide Anglican Communion. The inter-church relation committee of MTC made recommendation to the Church Council about the unity and Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma was entrusted with the task. The church entered into unity with the Anglican Communion based on the principles of Bonn agreement of 1931. They are as follows:

The churches entering into communion mutually agree on their Catholicity and freedom.

It protects the freedom of the individual churches; The two churches admit each other into the sacraments. It does not mean that the churches

4. C. V. John 'MTC and unity efforts' in M. J. Joseph (Ed) Conciliar Fellowship, Manganam (1979) pp 43-52.



accept the faith of the other church, practice of worship etc.

They mutually agree that both churches have the basic principles of faith.<sup>5</sup>

The Anglican church recognised the MTC as part of the Holy Catholic church.. She also accepted MTC as a church with the Orders of Bishop, Priest and Deacon and have Apostolic Succession. Therefore the Synod, the supreme body of the Anglican church decided to have mutual communion. This decision has been conveyed to the Metropolitan in 1975<sup>6</sup> On the basis of this, the MTC entered into communion with worldwide Anglican communion.

#### **A call to the Churches of Christ in India**

In 1952 Dr. Juhanon Mar Thoma and Dr. Mathews Mar Athanasius of the Mar Thoma Church gave an exhortation to the Churches of India for the unity of the churches based on certain fundamental principles. It is appropriate to discuss few points here.

The Mar Thoma Church owes its independent and separate existence as a denomination to the results of a Reformation which took place in the Syrian Church, chiefly because of its contact with the CMS missionaries. We claim our Reformation was a return to the ancient autonomy and Biblical faith of St. Thomas Christians which it had lost as the result of foreign interferences. We are proud that we remain a bridge church, preserving in it the best features of Eastern traditional forms of worship and the Reformation principles of Western Churches.

While we greatly value our autonomy and traditional forms of worship, we feel the time has come for us to make a move towards the realisation of a Church of Christ in India. Autonomy, Biblical faith, Eastern forms of Worship and evangelistic vision are our cherished ideals. We feel that our church must be willing to declare its readiness to become part of the church of Christ in India on the following basis:

1. The church should have its authority for its fundamental doctrines the clear teaching of the Bible which consists of its present 66 Books.

2. The church should accept the Historic Episcopacy as it has come through the ages and should have in it the two Dominical Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism.

3. The Nicene Creed must be accepted as expressing the essential christian faith.

4. The church to be accepted as the Body of Christ which has to carry on his work of preaching, teaching and healing and thus work for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

5. The forms and rituals of worship must not be an imitation of the West, but must be Eastern in the sense of being indigenous to India.

The above appear to us to be the truths and principles for which the Mar Thoma Church stands, and for a fuller and vaster realization of it, the church must be willing to lose itself. We make this call to the leaders of the Church of Christ in India, with the earnest hope and prayer that our

5. See C. V. John op. cit. 47-48.

6. For the letter from the Canterbury Archbishop Donald Cogan See *Malankara Sabha Tharaka*, February (1975) p. 24.



divided denominational loyalties may end and that Church of Christ in India, the Bharat Christian Church may become a reality in the not distant future.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Relation with the Church of South India (CSI)**

The Church of South India was inaugurated on 27th September 1947 by the organic Union of Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist Churches of South India. Based on the above principles of church union and the communion status with the Anglican Church the MTC began conversation for church unity with the CSI. In 1950, a committee was appointed to study the possibilities of church union. The committee submitted their recommendations in 1953. In 1961 the MTC Representative Assembly appointed a Commission to look into the possibilities of church union and to have conversation with the theological commission. The commission in their report pointed out that since all the priests are not episcopally ordained, the communion with CSI is not possible at that period, and the church have to wait until all the priests are episcopally ordained.<sup>8</sup> The Representative Assembly of MTC met in 1967 and requested the Metropolitan to appoint a theological commission to have dialogue with the theological commission of CSI in matters of faith, order and sacraments. Thus on the recommendations of the commission, the MTC decided to enter into full-communion with CSI. Finally these two churches reached to full communion status in 1971.

#### **The Relationship with the Church of North India (CNI)**

On 29th November 1970, the Church of North India was inaugurated by merging six different churches of protestant origin. They are Council of Baptist Church in North of India, Church of Brethren in India, The Disciples of Christ, The Church of India (Anglican), The Methodist Church of British and Australian Conference, The united Church of North India.

The Organisers of CNI took special attention that the ministry was completely integrated even at the formation of the new Church. The MTC was invited to participate in the inaugural service and Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan took part in the Service. The MTC had no difficulty in accepting the ministry of the new church. Negotiations took place soon for establishing full communion status. The MTC Representative Assembly resolved to have full communion with CNI in 1972 and entered into full communion in 1973 as with the CSI. The Synod of the CNI also made such a decision.<sup>9</sup>

#### **The Conciliar unity of MTC-CSI-CNI**

The Nairobi Conference of the World Council of Churches (WCC) held in 1975 brought out clearly and emphatically the concept of 'Conciliar Fellowship.' The one church is to be envisioned as conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship each local church possesses in communion with others the fulness of

7. The full text of the 'Call to churches' is given in Juhanon Mar Thoma, op cit - p. 42-43.

8. See Mar Thoma Syrian church Directory, p. 120-121.

9. Alexander Mar Thoma, The Mar Thoma Church, Heritage and Mission Tiruvalla, (1985), pp. 78-85.



Catholicity, witness to the same Apostolic faith and therefore recognises the others as belonging to the same church of Christ and guided by the same spirit. They are bound together because they have received the same baptism and share in the same Eucharist, they recognise each others ministers and members. They are one in common commitment to confess the gospel of Christ, to the world, to this end each church aims at maintaining and sustaining relationship with her sister churches expressed in conciliar gatherings wherever required for the fulfilment of their common calling.<sup>10</sup>

In short, we can say that the conciliar model emphasises the elements of variety and individuality. Councils are gathering of churches which are different from one another yet respect these differences, fully recognising one another's baptism, Eucharist and ministry, and meeting together from time to time for common counsel and common action.

### **The formation of Joint Council of MTC-CSI-CNI**

Through the formation of a Joint Council of MTC-CSI-CNI, the ecumenical relationship of the MTC entered into a new dimension in 1978. It is a result of deeper longing on the part of the three churches to manifest the God given unity in Christ beyond a full communion relationship. In 1975 the joint theological commission of the three churches issued a five point declaration among which the call to constitute a joint council was an

important one.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of the recommendations of the joint theological commission these churches decided to come together in a conciliar federal set up. Three churches decided to co-operate in the areas of mission, national concerns, and in matters of peace and justice and to remain as separate churches, keeping separate identity and autonomy of each church. Although the Joint Council has only advisory powers, in relation to matters internal to the constituent churches, the council can act on its own in matters relating to common responsibility and action.

### **Programmes of Unity<sup>12</sup>**

1. The celebration of the festival of unity in the second Sunday of November each year, local congregations are urged to celebrate the Eucharist in a rite not that of their own.

2. Publication of common Book of Liturgy to familiarise the people with the Eucharistic rite of other churches.

3. Publication of information literature to pass information of other churches.

4. Formation of regional, Joint Councils to manifest the unity at (eight) regional levels.

5. Joint Evangelistic Mission in Sikkim with Sharing resources from all churches.

6. Participation in decision making bodies of member churches as observers.

10. T. John (Ed.) *'Naveekaranathinte Thrithiya Kanaka Jubilee'*, Tiruvalla (1986) pp. 160-69.

11. Russel Chandran (Ed), *The Joint Council of CSI-CNI-MTC a brief History and Interpretation*, New Delhi (1984), pp. 39-40.

12. For details see, the Minutes of the Joint theological Commission of CSI-CNI-MTC Madras (1975).

The names of the heads of three churches are also mentioned during the great intercession at the Eucharist.

The Joint Council consisted of 5 Bishops, 10 clergy and 15 laity from each churches which totally come to 90 members. Recently this number has been reduced to 45 in 1994.

### **The Idea of a Common Name and its Rejection**

The Joint Theological Commission had proposed that as an expression of the existing unity, 'a common name' for the three churches should be adapted if the supreme decision making bodies of each church approve it. The proposed name was 'BHARAT CHRISTIAN CHURCH'. After due consideration, the CSI and CNI approved the proposal. But the Representative Assembly of the MTC did not accept this proposal. Since the CSI and CNI share a protestant tradition, and came under union of different such traditions, they have no difficulty in approving the proposal for a common name. For the MTC it is a question of identity. Theologically she shares a near agreement. The MTC as an Eastern reformed church wants to maintain her oriental nature and heritage and the Syrian liturgical tradition. The MTC shares with other Oriental Churches a celibate Episcopacy. It is feared that the adoption of a common name will gradually lead to the neglect of the oriental heritage of the church. Syrian Christian identity, was another barrier for rejecting the proposal for a common name. The MTC believes that the conciliar model will better preserve the authentic contribution of the diverse

tradition, in their theology, liturgy and the church polity.<sup>13</sup>

There should be more understanding with the churches. These three churches should have to seek constantly the best signs of the growing together. However a model of unity which allows for the preservation and growth of both East and West will be better for the churches in the Joint Council. The ill feeling resulted in the lack of agreement for a common name is to be healed. The Joint Council met in May 1994 at Bangalore, hosted by the MTC.<sup>14</sup> Unity in mission is to be strengthened. The need of the hour is to use the existing church structure and there by seek further unity among the churches and the world may say they are one.

### **Unique Relationship with the Malabar Independent Syrian Church (Thozhiyur Church)**

There is a special communion relationship between the Mar Thoma Church and the Malabar Independent Syrian Church (Thozhiyur Church) especially during consecration of bishops. Here we have to make a brief reference to the origin of this church. Mar Gregorios, a Metropolitan under the see of the Patriarch of Antioch visited Malankara (1751-73). He consecrated Abraham Kathanar of Kattumangattu family in 1772 with the title Abraham Mar Koorilose. This was not approved by Mar Dionysius I, the Metropolitan of Malankara because the consecration was without his consent or recognition. Mar Koorilose was forced to go out of Travancore and settle in Anjoor (Thozhiyur) in British

13. Thomas I. Best (Ed), Living today towards visible unity, Faith and Order Paper 142. Geneva (1988) p. 111-17.

14. See Metropolitan's letter in 'Malankara Sabha Tharaka', October (1994) p. 5.



Malabar. Later he and his successors established their seat at that place and was later known as the Malabar Independent Syrian Church (MISC).<sup>15</sup>

This small one Diocese Church was very helpful in the critical time of the undivided non-Roman Malankara Church and later to the Mar Thoma Syrian Church. Geevarghese Mar Philexinos (1811-1829) consecrated 3 Metropolitans to the Malankara Church and he was the acting Metropolitan of Malankara Church at two different periods.

In 1856, Mathews Mar Athanasius, the Metropolitan of Malankara and the pioneer of reformation in the Syrian Church, consecrated Joseph Mar Koorilose as the Metropolitan of MISC. In 1893, Thomas Mar Athanasius, Metropolitan of MTC passed away without consecrating a successor. The MTC was in a critical situation without a bishop. But at that time, it was Joseph Mar Athanasius of MISC along with his Suffragan Geevarghese Mar Koorilose came to Kottayam and consecrated Rev. Titus as Titus I Mar Thoma Metropolitan for the MTC (1894).<sup>16</sup> The centenary of this historic event is celebrated by the MTC in September 1994 at the general assembly of the church held at Tiruvalla. Here after the friendly relationship in the episcopal consecration is continued even today. From 1935 onwards, it is the Mar Thoma Metropolitans consecrate bishops for the MISC, and the bishops of MISC take part in the consecration of Mar

Thoma Bishops.<sup>17</sup> At present Joseph Mar Koorilose II is the (13th) Metropolitan of MISC.

In faith and practice the MISC is very close to the Jacobite-Orthodox Churches. They follow the liturgy of the West Syrian tradition. But this church is in communion with the MTC and take part in each other's consecration.<sup>17</sup> This is a unique model of church unity. In no way does the MTC interfere in the administration of MISC. There is a provision in the constitution of the MISC "that if there any disputes arises about this constitution or any other matters related to the church, it should approach the head of the-Sister Church - the Mar Thoma Church and solve the problems with their decision as our forefathers did and as the tradition".<sup>18</sup> This communion relationship shows that the mutual consecration of bishops does not lead to domination or intervention of the other church as we learn from history of these churches. If we followed this model of communion relationship we could have avoided many divisions in the Syrian Church of Kerala. It further calls our attention to the reality that even when there is difference in faith and doctrine, churches can enter into communion or unity. This is a unique example of Ecumenism.<sup>19</sup>

#### The Orthodox - Mar Thoma Conversations

The Early phase : After ten years of long litigation in 1889, the Church

15. K. C. Varghese, *Malabar Swathanthra Suriyani Sabha Charithram*, Kunnankulam (1972) p. 8.
16. Juhanon Mar Thoma, *Christianity in India*, pp. 16-17.
17. See John Fenwick, *The Malabar Independent Syrian Church*, Nottingham (1992) pp. 32-42.
18. See the Constitution of Malabar Independent Syrian Church, Section-21.
19. George Mathew, 'Mar Thoma Church and Thozhiyur Church'. in *Malankara Sobha Tharaka* September (1994), pp. 19-20, 27.

was divided into two. There were long term bitterness and enmity between the Mar Thoma - Orthodox churches. In 1912, a meeting was convened by John R. Mott, the secretary of International Missionary Council (IMC), at Serampore, near Calcutta. This was attended by Vattasseril Mar Dionysius of the Orthodox Church and Titus II Mar Thoma of the MTC and clergy and laity from both churches. It was decided to start a united educational institution. Thus in 1921 with the blessings of different heads of the churches (viz Mar Thoma - Orthodox - Anglican) the Union Christian College was begun.<sup>20</sup>

The unity later led to informal discussions about coming closer to unity. Another meeting was presided over by the Anglican Bishop Moore. Bishops and members from MTC and Orthodox were present and the discussions were about faith, practice and sacraments of different churches. This has contributed to know each other's position of faith and doctrine.

#### Orthodox Mar Thoma Conversation (1968-70)

Few members of the Orthodox Syrian Church and the Mar Thoma Syrian Church have met together under the presidentship of Fr. Paul Varghese (later Metropolitan Paulose Mar Gregorios) to consider in a cordial and prayerful atmosphere, how these two churches may draw closer to each other in Christ for the furtherance of God's purpose for the churches. These meetings were unofficial and informal. K. M. Cherian and C. P. Mathew were the conveners from the Orthodox and Mar Thoma Churches respectively. This

conversation continued for three years. Several papers were read and discussed and posed the following question.

"Even all the differences that now exist between our churches, is not what we share an adequate basis for greater co-operation in fulfilling the common task entrusted to us by our Lord and Saviour. It is a decision to be made at a more official level, but our own experience has shown that there is much that could be done together now."<sup>21</sup>

The joint statement further says that "we have many things in common is nothing surprising. Till the latter part of 19th century, we had been one undivided church for many centuries. We still confess the same Trinitarian and Biblical faith based on the incarnation, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ which is also expressed in the Nicene Creed".<sup>22</sup>

The following agreed statements, were presented before the churches.

1. Common History — Our two Churches shared a common history till the latter half of the 19th century. This common history in one undivided church for some eighteen centuries or more still exists as a strong bond between our two churches.

2. Common faith — Much of the faith of the Christian church we still hold in common. The Great Ecumenical Creed of Nicea and Constantinople still remains fundamentally the formulation of our faith.

3. Bible — We both hold the Bible in highest reverence as the Spirit inspired Word of God, the Apostolic

20. Marthoma Syrian Church Directory, p. 122f.

21. Paul Varghese & M. Thommen (ed), Orthodox - Mar Thoma Conversations, some papers and statements, Kottayam (1971) p. 3.

22. Paul Varghese & M. Thommen (ed), p. 3.



testimony to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

4. The Eucharist — Both our churches are agreed that the Eucharist is the central act of worship of the church in which we share in the one eternal and unrepeatable sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. We have agreed that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, not in the sense that it repeats the unique sacrifice of calvary, but it makes the sacrifice of calvary present in our times and enables us to participate in the saving power of the cross and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. The Ministry — We are agreed that the episcopal ministry with presbyters and deacons to assist, the bishops belongs historically to the life of the church. We both believe that the Holy Spirit bestows special grace and power through the sacrament of ordination.

6. The place of the departed — We both agree that the belief in the communion of saints belongs to the faith and practice of both our churches, that all those who belong to Christ are united to Christ and each other in the Body of Christ, that the death does not separate the believer from Christ or his body.

7. The practice — There is much else that is common between us in practice. The Eucharistic and other liturgies we use are similar in many respects.<sup>23</sup>

But after these conversations nothing has happened in the relationship between two churches, for another two decades. The Dialogue entered into a new phase in 1992 after appo-

inting a committee from both churches by the Holy Episcopal Synods.

#### Mar Thoma — Orthodox Dialogue (1992—)

In 1992, by the decision of the Episcopal Synod of the Mar Thoma Church, the Metropolitan of MTC wrote a letter to the Catholicos of the Orthodox Church, showing the willingness to have dialogue with the Orthodox church for church union. In response to the letter, the Catholicos expressed their readiness for a dialogue with MTC. A commission was appointed for this purpose by both churches. It includes bishops, priests and lay persons. There were two sittings, the first at the Orthodox Theological Seminary and the second at the Mar Thoma Theological seminary. The theme for the first dialogue was 'Bible and Tradition'. It was agreed that the Bible is the part of the tradition of the church. The same theme is continued in the second session.

Fr. T. J. Joshua, one of the delegates of the commission of the Orthodox Church comments about this as follows:

"The Orthodox and Mar Thoma churches have very close relationship. Both churches claim the Saint Thomas heritage and Syrian tradition. There are common elements between these churches in worship and church life. Socially there is more relationship between these two churches than with any other churches".<sup>24</sup>

He further states that 'these two churches have considerable difference. Though the MTC claims to be Oriental, in matters of faith she is more close to protestant doctrines.' We have

23. Paul Varghese, p. 5-7.

24. See Fr. T. J. Joshua 'Orthodox — Mar Thoma Church Dialogue in *Purohithan*, Vol. XI. No. 2 (1993), PP. 55 — 58.

reached on certain common agreement two decades before. Now the present dialogue should begin from there. The Intercession of Saints, prayer for the departed etc. are also hurdles in the path of discussion. It will take long time to enter into communion relationship. Both churches need more patience and correct understanding each other for further relationship.

### The Lima Document and Church Union

The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of churches produced a Joint Document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry in 1982 at Lima, the capital city of Peru, and decided to transmit this agreed statement. This represents the theological convergence that has been achieved through decades of dialogue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the preface of the document it is stated that the Lima text represents the significant theological convergence which Faith and Order has discerned and formulated. Those who know how widely the churches have differed in doctrine and practice on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry will appreciate the importance of the larger number of agreement registered here.<sup>25</sup>

In leaving behind the hostilities of the past, the churches have begun to discover many promising convergences in their shared convictions and perspectives. This convergence gives assurance that despite much diversity in theological expression the churches have much in common in their understanding of faith.

On the basis of this document, the churches should come together to share their common christian tradition

on essential elements of Christian communion. Accepting the ministry and the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist will lead the churches into God's gift of church unity.

### Conclusion

In this discussion, we have seen the different levels and models of Ecumenism that Mar Thoma Church maintains with other churches. Though MTC is a small church, she is ready to keep open her doors to others for discussion based on certain principles and without compromising her cherished christian values. G. Chediath wrote about MTC like this "Mar Thoma Church shows greater interest in ecumenism than any other churches. Evangelical life, proclamation of the word, administration of the church by giving participation to people etc. are to be specially mentioned. It is high time that other churches in Kerala should begin discussion for unity at theological level. Only through discussions, misunderstanding can be removed. Mar Thoma Church also have to take the universal tradition of world wide church into consideration. The spirit of God is leading, the church towards this path."<sup>26</sup>

The ecumenical experience of Mar Thoma Church shows that, by keeping the individuality and identity of each church, they can enter into communion relationship. The MTC-C SI-CNI unity and the special relationship with Malabar Independent Syrian Church reveal this reality. MTC always stand for autonomy of the church. At the same time she seeks unity of churches with diversified tradition and culture. Let me conclude this discussion by quoting Alexander Mar Thoma:

25. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order paper No. 111 Geneva (1986) P - IX

26. G. Chediath, *Keralathile Christhava Sabhakal*, Kottayam (1993), p. 218-19.



## Exile and Home-Coming for the Oriental Catholics in India

No other country in the world is perhaps so diverse yet having such a wonderful unity as India; we do not forget the divisive tendencies that are seen now due to some external influences. In religion, culture, language and even in dressing and eating habits the people are different from region to region. But all are Indians and the main religion is Hinduism which has an immense capacity to appreciate whatever is now and is ready to accept from others without harming its own identity. The Catholic church in India also is manifested in three divergent forms with particular theological visions, spiritualities, worship forms and legal disciplines in a wonderful *perichoresis*. We believe in a Triune God as revealed by Jesus whose gospel which is one, has come to us in four forms complementing and enriching each other. The church we live in is also a communion

of churches. Diversity means freedom, creativity, possibility and beauty. If misused, it can also be the cause of division and rivalry which are the result of egoism and narrow-mindedness. The human spirit refuses to be circumscribed, monotonous and mechanical. One whose vision is limited and inhibited fails to see the richness of the million expressions of human creativity. Such a person is afraid of the immensity of diversity and possibility that are open to humanity. Being subjected to a fear-complex, one may be lost in such a world where differences appear as intolerable. This is evidently an abnormal situation.

### Let My People Go

The Hebrews in Egypt heard the voice of God directed to Pharaoh, their persecutor, through the mouth of Moses

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"The Mar Thoma Church combines evangelical and reformed doctrines with ancient forms of worship and practices. As a reformed church with progressive outlook, agrees very much with the reformed doctrines of the Western Churches. Therefore in the days of ecumenism there is much in

common in faith and doctrine between the MTC and reformed churches. At the same time as it continues in the Apostolic episcopal tradition, and ancient oriental practices, it has much in common with the Orthodox churches. Thus it is regarded by many in the ecumenical world as a bridge church."<sup>27</sup>

Rev. George Mathew

their liberator. Having become conscious of their identity, the Oriental Catholics want to be themselves. They yearn for a Home-coming\* while the prophetic call rings in their ears: "Let my people go!" It is not a geographical home-coming but an ecclesial and theological one. Their perception of the reality of the Church has given them a liberated and liberating idea of the Church in which they are deeply convinced that in the heart of Catholicity or universality there is individuality and particularity and that where these are denied there is only monolithicity which is against human nature and the will of God. Each human person is particular, each human community too has its own individuality with special charisms and gifts, while the one Spirit unites them all in a healthy *koinonia*. An artificial power/authority structure wants that particularist communities deny their rootage for a universal myth of sterile uniformity. Those whose vision is limited or clouded are unable to go beyond the immediate and they cling to a superficial and periferal unity and tranquility. It is a shameful fact of Indian history that some Christians in India preferred the British rule in India to the rule by Indians.

Moses the liberator appointed by God invited the Hebrews to march into freedom. But many could not understand and appreciate a better but painful future and so they opposed the liberator. Pharaoh too wanted to keep the people by all means and he threatened and even meted out harsher treatment to them. The great existential problem was what to choose. A better but painful and uncertain future, or an assured and relatively calm slavery. The people opted for the latter until the powerful hand of God was manifested to them.

The Egyptian and Babylonian exile experiences of the Hebrews have their parallels in the history and life of the Oriental Catholics in India. Of course, they are in no way enslaved by a Pharaoh, yet they are controlled by a sister church in the same communion who refuses them to be themselves. They feel threatened that they will be isolated and their children will have no educational facilities. It is indeed, a wild fantasy; our bretheren can never be so unchristian, though some sentiments may be involved. A genuinely human sense is to prevail in all these in a mature way. Growth means expansion and even geographical distancing; but no alienation, no separation of hearts. Abraham said to Lot: "Let there be no strife between you and me... for we are kindred," (Gen 13,8). When Second Isiah promised and proclaimed home-coming to the exiled people, they did not listen to him. Because, being away from home they were victims of an *amnesia*, a forgetfulness which was nourished by the relative gains they had made in terms of riches, education and culture. Again in the ecclesial home-coming there is no question of loosing any of these. Fear was expressed by a powerful and vociferous minority when the oriental Eparchy of Thalassery was established in 1953 which has grown so credibly and has given birth to two other Eparchies: Mananthawady (1973) and Thamarasserry (1986) within such a short time. The Eparchy of Kalyan too had opposition and still has from a handful of influential people. But the large majority of the faithful are happy in spite of some inconveniences which they are making up with strenuous efforts and patient sacrifices. The people feel that they are pastored the way they reasonably expect.

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\* The writer is inspired by Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination. Prophetic Voices in Exile*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1987.



### Less Catholic Churches

Some scholars speak about the "lesser Eastern churches", which seems not to be a happy term. But in fact, there are churches treated as less Catholic though the equality of the churches is written and proclaimed everywhere. The Oriental Catholics in India spread in the different parts of the country in search of work were compelled to be at the mercy of the Latins for their spiritual needs as the Orientals were not allowed as churches in many parts of their own land. The whole of India is open to the Latins while the Orientals are territorially marginalised. This unjust situation is unthinkable in the church in the twentieth century when we speak so much about human rights and human freedom. The Latin definition of the church as related to land was partially nullified by the Second Vatican, yet in India, it is still strongly upheld. Why are the Orientals denied the rights which the Latin church, a church which came later, enjoys all over India? This step-motherly attitude is reflected even in the raising of the Syro-Malabar church to the dignity of an Archepiscopal Church. The church whose head was known as the Metropolitan of ALL INDIA got a new title which also restricted its authority within the same church. The new honour seems to be simply to honour the new code of Oriental Canon Law for which two heads in the same church would appear an anomaly.

The territorial restriction involves a pressure tactics about which many are perhaps not aware. For whatever reason as the Orientals go out of the narrow territory allotted to them so condescendingly, they have to shed their ecclesial identity if they are to remain Catholic, while the Non-Catholic Orientals thrive all over India with their communities and bishops. Again,

those who are desirous to do evangelisation in the north or wish to enter a religious congregation have to bracket their identity and hide the same. The writer knows of religious communities in which candidates are forbidden to speak about their own churches. For them the only Catholic church is the Latin church and all the rest are mere Rites without rights or "lesser Catholic churches".

### A Hypocritical Ecumenism

In the ecumenical assemblies Catholics call some other churches "sister churches" and their heads are qualified as "holinesses" in the typical Roman way. But the Orientals within the fold are mere Ritists and their growth and spread are seen as a threat to evangelisation. They are denied equality, are diplomatically domesticated and their traditional and time-honoured rights are curtailed or nullified. Here catholicity and universality become victims on the altar of uniformism. Universality is proclaimed outside and uniformity is imposed within. There is disparity between action and talk, it is hypocrisy.

### In the Name of Evangelisation

Every Christian is convinced that to be a Christian means living and sharing the good news with one's brothers and sisters. If we are authentically convinced of our faith-experience, we are compelled from within to speak it out. But this cannot be the monopoly of any individual church. Diversity is natural to the Indian psyche and the presence of different traditions is only an additional attraction to the Indian ethos which is able to imagine God and his ways differently, which may appear contradictory to the Western mind. Of course, there has to be some understanding and co-ordination among the churches in this important activity.

### Conclusions

If the churches in the same communion have the same dignity, they are to enjoy the same rights and privileges, mutually recognising and accepting individuality and diversity. This sort of life makes our ecumenical efforts more genuine and sincere. Evangelisation cannot be the monopoly of my church and the diversity of an ecclesial traditions or methods cannot in any way be a hindrance in the Indian context. Let the charity we preach be first practised within the church in our inter-ecclesial dealings. If we cannot live and work together as brothers and sisters in the same faith accepting each other with diversity; our words are empty. If we fail to live and work together within the fold, we have no right to preach Jesus or his peace to the rest of the world.

Ecclesial Home-Coming for the Oriental Catholics was loudly proclaimed in the Second Vatican in unambiguous terms and was initiated, though after so many years and after much deliberation, with the erection of the Eparchy of Kalyan in India. Even some Orientals were against it and a few still continue to oppose it for some small practical advantages, which they fear to loose. "Some of them seem to be under the grip of *Stockholm syndrome* which makes them identify themselves with the captors while alienating themselves from their rescuers". Anyhow, the Orientals must have the freedom and possibility for home-coming and that should be encouraged by all means. Peace is the fruit of justice and anybody who denies justice, in whatever pretext, cannot proclaim peace to a world that needs it so badly.

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# Thoughts on Ecumenism with Special Reference to Syrian Orthodox Stand Point

## 1) The word Oikumene

The word ecumenism is derived from the Greek word oikumene. Though these words are very familiar to us we have to examine and remind the meaning of these words before we speak about ecumenism. Oikumene came from the Greek verb 'oikeo' and means mainly "to inhabit" "to live" "to maintain a house" etc. Oikumene is the participle form of "Oikeo" and means 'the whole inhabited earth' 'mankind' 'civilized world' etc. The whole Greek empire was called Oikumene after the death of the Emperor Alexander the great. The Romans took over the word Oikumene and they applied it to denote the whole Roman Empire.

The word Oikumene appears in New Testament fourteen times (Mt. 24:14; Lk. 2:1; 4:5; 21:26; Acts 11:28; 17:6; 17:31; 19:27; Rom. 10:18; Heb. 1:6; 2:5; Rev. 12:9; 16:4; 3:10). According to St. Mathew 24:14, before the end of the world, the gospel will be preached through out the whole world. The Gospel is not to be limited to a particular caste, community or to a particular region, but it is meant for all the people on earth. That the Gospel is

to be preached all over the world is expressed by using the word Oikumene. It is St. Luke, who has used the word Oikumene mostly. The word appears eight times in the Gospel of St. Luke and in Acts together. He has also used this word to mean the whole world, keeping in mind the geographical extensions. As a whole it can be said that the Oikumene is used in the New Testament to imply geographical extension in the sense of either the whole of the Roman empire or the whole world.

## 2) Developments in the use of the words "Oikumene" and ecumenical

Changes in the meaning and use of these words have occurred in the course of history in accordance with the circumstances. Vissert Hooft<sup>1</sup> one of the most eminent leaders of the ecumenical movement has attempted to analyse the meaning of the epithet "ecumenical" taking into account the changes which have occurred in its use. According to him the adjective ecumenical can be given the following seven meanings, if we examine the use of this word in the course of history until now:

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1. Das Wort "Ökumenisch" seine Geschichte und Verwendung, in: Geschichte der Ökumenischen Bewegung 1917-1948 II (Hrsg. R. Rouse / S.C. Neill) Gottingen 1973, 434ff

- 1) Including or representing the whole of the inhabited world.
- 2) Including or representing the whole of the Roman Empire.
- 3) Including or representing the whole Christian Church.
- 4) That which has got recognition of the entire church.
- 5) That which is related to the world wide evangelical endeavour of the church.
- 6) Regarding the relation between or the union of two or more churches.
- 7) That which signifies the knowledge and desire of the Christian unity.

When we examine the above mentioned development in the meaning and use of the word ecumenical or oikumene we can find out that this word was used originally in a very broad meaning. But now a days we use it in a specific and particular sense.

### 3) Ecumenism in its broader sense

To use the word Oikumene only to indicate the unity of the church or to indicate the relation between two or more churches seems to be inconsistent with the broad meaning of the word. Originally in secular field and also in New Testament this word was used to mean the whole world. After the conversion of the Roman empire to christianity the word ecumenical was used in connection with the church. Even by relating the word to the church one can give to it a broad meaning. Because the church is catholic or universal, the entire world is the field of work of the Church (Eph. 1:23). The unity of the Church should be helpful to unite the whole mankind in the entire world as one family in communion with God the Father and thus realising the brotherhood of the

whole mankind. Since the Church is catholic salvation of the entire world should become the aim of the Church. When one speaks about the unity of the Church, one cannot separate from it the unity of the entire world and the mankind. If we think in this manner it is not possible to separate the non-Christian religions from the ecumenical movement.

### 4) The Syrian Orthodox Standpoint

The Christian Confession of faith is that the Church is one and therefore the unity is important. If ecumenism now a days mainly deals with the unity among different Churches, then arises the question of the type of unity. When we speak about unity, it does not mean an external or structural unity but a spiritual and internal unity. In other words unity should not be confused with uniformity. Let us try to explain the type of unity in simple terms. The desire for unity is understood as unity in diversity. The different Churches in the world each Church having its own special type of liturgical, linguistic, social and cultural traditions and characteristics can be compared to different variety of flowers in a garden. We can see that each flower has got its own unique form, colour and odour. For us these unique qualities of each flower become attractive. At the same time we should also note that all these plants bearing different flowers do receive light from the same sun, breath air from the same atmosphere and take water and food from the same soil. Although, the source out of which they draw their energy is the same they do keep their unique and individual qualities. For example a Rose flower is distinguished through its unique shape, colour and odour. Likewise the Syrian Orthodox Christians are known through their distinct language, liturgy and traditions. The



particular practices and traditions of a church is the way of life and expression of faith of that church. Therefore the first step to ecumenism is to have mutual respect for each others traditions. Only through direct contact and theological dialogues we can study and grasp the theological stand point of the sister Churches and understand each other properly. Otherwise the ecumenical relations will be hindered through misunderstandings and prejudices. The idea of conversion from one denomination to another do not agree with the spirit of ecumenism.

## 5) Biblical and Theological basis of ecumenism

Here I am not going to make a detailed survey of the New Testament to find out the references connected to ecumenism. From the ecumenical point of view the letter to the Ephesians is more important than any other book in the N. T. Therefore I would like to take Ephesians as an example to show the biblical and theological bases of the concept of ecumenism. The New Testament as a whole takes it for granted, that the Church is one. In Ephesians the unity of the universal Church is not one among many themes but on the whole the main theme.<sup>2</sup> The call for unity in Ephesians, Chapter 4 can be taken as the motto of ecumenism. "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:3-6). The ecumenical message in Ephesians cannot be limited in the relation between Churches or in the unity of the Church. According to Ephesians the Christian

message of salvation is for the whole creation and Ephesians presents the cosmic Christ for the salvation of the Cosmos. The unity of the mankind and salvation of the whole Cosmos are the ultimate ecumenical goals that we find in Ephesians (Eph. 1:10-23).

### a) Oneness of the church as prearranged gift of God

Oneness or unity of the church is not a human creation, but God's gift which was already given when the church was established. The apostle advises the church to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". Here the unity of the Spirit is aimed at the unity of the Church. The advice to keep or maintain the unity implies that the unity is already given. Oneness and unity are not something that we are going to create newly, but something, that we have to maintain very eagerly. The task of ecumenism is to reestablish the lost God given unity.

### b) The Holy Spirit and the unity of the Church

The Church as the mystical body of Christ came into being by the call of the Holy Spirit and the same Spirit works as the soul of the mystical body of Christ ie the Universal Church when the author of Ephesians speaks about the different aspects of unity of the church his appeal to us is to keep the unity of the spirit (Eph. 4:3). St. Paul sees in the Holy Spirit the unity of the mystical body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The decree on ecumenism of the 2nd Vatican Council emphasises the role of the spirit, in keeping the unity of the Church: "The Holy Spirit who lives in the believers and leads and rules the Church creates this wonderful Koinonia (fellowship) of believers and

2. Mussner. F, Der Brief an die Epheser, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament. Bd 10. Würzburg 1982, 175ff

connects them to Christ so intimately, that he is the principle of the unity of the Church".<sup>3</sup> The one universal Church came into being through the call of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Therefore the day of Pentecost can be called as the Birthday of the Church. Besides, in our creed the confession of faith in one holy catholic and apostolic Church is an inseparable part of our confession of faith in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who works in each individual and in the universal Church is able to create the unity. The unity of the spirit therefore is the first step towards the unity of the Church. Because the one Spirit connects all the believers together and also all the believers with God (Eph. 2:18) we can say that the Holy Spirit realises the horizontal and vertical unity.

#### c) One Lord and the Unity of the Church

According to Eph. 4:5 one Lord is another important aspect of the unity of the church. All the churches in the world confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord and saviour of the world. According to Eph. 2:14-18 Jesus Christ is the Lord and creator of a new humanity that is the church. Through his death on the cross he has broken down the dividing wall of hostility and the Jews and the gentiles, who were hostile to each other were brought together to form the new humanity. The Jews and Gentiles here represent the whole mankind. Jesus Christ is therefore not only the basis but also the aim of the efforts to reestablish the unity of the church.

#### d) God the Father and the unity of the church

God is pictured as God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3-17). All the believers as members of the

body of Christ are inseparably related to Christ. The believers have also received the Holy Spirit at the time of baptism (Eph. 1:13) and the Spirit is actually the Spirit of sonship (Rom. 8:15). Through the possession of the Holy Spirit all the believers became sons and daughters of God and God their father. Therefore one God the father is the origin and source of unity (Eph. 4:5).

#### e) The Holy Trinity and the Unity of the Church

The author of the letter to the Ephesians points out seven important aspects when he deals with the unity of the universal Church. They are one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and above all one God and Father of us all (Eph. 4:4-6). If we closely examine these seven basic aspects of unity and make a selection from them, we can put one Spirit, one Lord and one God the Father in the middle point. In the attempt to give theological meaning and interpretation to the unity of the Universal Church the author of Ephesians knowingly or unknowingly arrive at a trinitarian ecclesiology. Because the essence and existence of the church is inseparably related to the Trinity we have to see the basis of ecumenism in the Trinity. In the decree on ecumenism of 2nd Vatican Council the unity and oneness of the Trinity are pointed out as the model of the unity of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

#### f) The Christian love as the basic principle of ecumenism

The driving force behind all the work of salvation of God is nothing other than the love of God. The Church, that is formed as a result of the work of salvation of God, is a visible expression of this divine love.

3. Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil in: LThK (Ergänzungsband II) 47

4. Ibid 49



The church is in this sense the arena prepared by God to practise and realise His love in this world. The bridegroom Jesus Christ saved the bride the church through his endless selfsacrificing love. The right conduct of a member of the church is summarised in Eph. and Col. as "faith in the Lord Jesus" and "love towards all the saints" (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4). The first step towards ecumenism on the part of all the churches and each individual is to acquire this love.<sup>5</sup> The love as the first fruit of the spirit is the living and everlasting bond of unity.

**g) A Challenge, that the churches are reluctant to face**

In the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross we see the execution of the divine love in history. We believe that his death on the cross was for the salvation of the mankind. As a result of the execution of the divine love in history a new humanity that is the church came into existence (Eph. 2:14-18). In this sense it is the selfsacrificing love of God that gave birth to the church, which is the body of Christ.<sup>6</sup> Therefore the essence of the Church is the selfsacrificing divine love and the purpose of the existence of the church in this world is to reveal this love to the whole mankind so that the humanity and the whole cosmos may follow the path of God and be saved. The selfless and selfsacrificing love of God can be revealed only through practicing it in the life of the church in this world. It is a challenge to all the churches

in this world and we are all reluctant to face this challenge. Facing of this challenge must become the greatest principle of ecumenism.<sup>7</sup>

**6) The unity of mankind and the whole Cosmos**

Because God is the creator of mankind and the whole Cosmos the work of salvation of God is not limited or confined in a particular race or in the universal church. In the plan of salvation of God not only the mankind but the whole creation is included (Eph. 1:10.23). We know that ecumenism in its broader sense is not limited in the unity of the Church alone. The whole creation comes under the purview of ecumenism.

**a) Jesus Christ as the head of the Church and the whole Cosmos<sup>8</sup>**

In the New Testament Ephesians and Colossians present a wider outlook in Christological thinking. According to these two letters Jesus Christ is not only the head of the Church but also the head of the cosmos. That is why the Christology of these two letters is called cosmic Christology. The ultimate aim of the work of salvation of God is revealed in Eph. 1:10. In the fullness of time everything on earth and in heaven must be brought under one head that is Jesus Christ. The ultimate aim of ecumenism is also the same as above. Therefore when we promote ecumenism we become co-workers in the work of salvation of God. The widest outlook on ecumenism is implied in Eph. 1:10

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5. Bea. A: Der Weg zur Einheit nach dem Konzil, Freiburg/Basel/Wien 1966, 210f
  6. Schnackenburg: Christus Geist und Gemeinde (Eph 4:1-16), in: Christ and the Spirit in New Testament (FS C.F.D. Moule) Cambridge 1973, 279-296.
  7. Adai Jacob; Der Heilige Geist als Gegenwart Gottes in den einzelnen Christen in der Kirche und in der Welt, Frankfurt 1985, 336
  8. Mussner: Der Brief an die Epheser, 182.

**b) The responsibility of the Church**

In the New Testament the Church is presented not as a worldly institution intended to fulfil some selfish motives. The church exists in this world to fulfil some noble responsibilities entrusted by God. Spreading of the Gospel in the whole world is one among them. (Mt. 28:19). According to Eph. 1:23 the Church is the fullness that fills everything. Here the mediatory role of Christ is revealed. The church as the body of Christ has the responsibility to take up and continue the mission of Christ in this world.

(Eph. 3:10). Through revealing the love and glory of God in its life Church has to bring the world with in the purview of the work of salvation of God. In this sense ecumenism is duty and responsibility of the Church. The church has to play a mediatory role realizing the unity and universal brotherhood of mankind and in the redemption of the creation. In short the church is the elected people of God elected to be His coworker to continue the work of salvation of God.

**7) Conclusion**

In scientific and economic fields the world has achieved wonderful developments. We have now very fast media of transport and communication. We have the feeling that the nations of the world are very close to each other. But at the same time we know the fact that disunity and disintegration increase day by day. Religious fundamentalism, terrorism, communalism etc. are so powerful evils that they are staring at the mankind to swallow it. In such a situation it is high time that the churches of the world think more seriously about ecumenism. Only through practicing a creative and positive ecumenism that the churches of the world can contribute and play its role in realising the unity of the mankind. Ecumenism must be grasped in its broader sense and our aim must be a new world, where the divine love must become the guiding principle and under one God the Father the brotherhood of mankind is realised.

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# Documentations

## **Report of the third PRO ORIENTE Study Seminar “Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church” (Vienna, 1-5 July 1994).**

At the invitation of PRO ORIENTE a third study seminar was held in Vienna, in the Bildungshaus Lainz, from 1-5 July 1994, on the theme “Ecclesiology and the Unity of the Church”. Its purpose was to continue the work started at the two previous study seminars on “Primacy”, in 1991, and on “Concils and Conciliarity”, in 1992.

The main theme this time was a comparative study of the ecclesiologies of the Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox Churches with special attention given to the place of the Oriental Catholic Churches. A number of specialists on this subject and theologians of the Oriental Orthodox and Oriental Catholic Churches took part in the presentations and discussions.

The general theme was introduced by two presentations on “Ecclesiology and the search for communion between East and West”: one from the Catholic side by Prof. Fr. Herve Legrand OP (Paris) and one from the Oriental Orthodox side by Prof. Dr. Emil Maher Ishak (Cairo), of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Two general briefings were given to the participants as a contribution to the discussions: 1. “The Current Theological Discussion of the Problems of Uniatism and Proselytism in the Framework of the Theological Dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox”, by Fr. Frans Bouwen PA (Jerusalem); 2. “The Ecclesiological and Canonical Status of the Oriental Catholic Churches according to Vaticanum II and the Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium (1991)”, by Prof. Richard Potz (Vienna).

“The role of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the Search for Communion between East and West”, was introduced by two representatives of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: Archbishop Mar Gregorios of Aleppo of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch, and Archbishop Mesrob K. Krikorian of Vienna of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Etchmiadzin, as well as by two representatives of the Oriental Catholic Churches: Fr. Makarios Tawfiq (Cairo) of the Coptic Catholic Church, and Archbishop Mar Joseph Powathil of Changanacherry of the Syro-Malabar Church.

The discussions that followed the introductory papers were characterized by a spirit of fraternal openness, brotherly love and peaceful joy in the Holy

Spirit. The main elements of the common reflection can be summarized in the following points.

Both the Roman Catholic and the Oriental Orthodox families of churches seek unity on the basis of an Ecclesiology of communion. Communion, though having a broad spectrum of meanings primarily signifies eucharistic communion in both our traditions.

On each place where the Eucharist is celebrated in the one faith and around the bishop in the Apostolic succession the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is present in its fullness. This local church is in communion with all other churches that celebrate the same Eucharist in the same Apostolic Faith. The links of communion are the bishops. The worldwide church (Church universal) is a communion of local Churches, bound together at every level by ways of a conciliar fellowship. It is within this conciliarity that the presence and function of Primacy should be seen, at the local, regional and universal levels.

Churches in full communion with each other are Sister Churches in the full sense of the word. In spite of the fact that the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches are not yet in full communion, they have already so much in common regarding Apostolic Faith and sacramental life that they can call each other Sister Churches, although in a still imperfect way.

We commonly recognize that in each one of our traditions we have some difficulties in expressing church unity at the regional level or within the wider context of our communions. Having this problem in common, we believe that we can learn from each other and we hope that reflecting in common we shall find better ways to express the full catholicity of the One Church.

For the time being, divergences appear between Roman Catholic and Oriental Orthodox traditions in understanding the wider character of ecclesial communion.

While the Roman Catholic Church can qualify itself as a communion of churches, it sets the principle of communion with the Bishop of Rome as successor of Peter as an essential condition for this ecclesial authenticity of the churches and their communion. The concepts of the universal church and universal primacy of the Bishop of Rome are integral to this understanding of communion.

The Orthodox Churches maintain the principle of eucharistic communion in one faith between this local churches in a conciliar context as a sufficient expression of the ecclesiology of communion. Integral to this communion is the catholicity of the church understood as the fullness of truth which includes historical and geographical elements. In a situation of true unity it is his mutual communion among this churches that becomes the essential and visible sign of the ecclesial authenticity of churches. It does not require any exclusive authentication by any one See within this communion.

The integral connection between ecclesiality, catholicity, conciliarity, primacy and unity cannot be underestimated. The holistic nature of unity as



understood in Western and Eastern traditions demands that we consider these elements not in isolation, but in their constant mutual interactions.

A deep awareness of the undivided church is ingrained in our different ecclesiological positions. The vision of one church arises from the reality of the one Body of Christ.

The concept and practice of primacy and in particular the nature of the interrelation between primacy and conciliarity at the universal level constitute one of the main and most sensitive points of difference between the Catholic and Oriental Orthodox Churches. Common reflection and research should continue in order to clarify the principles and to come to a commonly acceptable practice.

The quality of the relations between the local Churches and the world-wide Church, in full respect for the distinct identity and the legitimate diversity of the traditions is intimately linked with the interrelations between primacy and conciliarity, especially on the universal level. Some form of primacy is recognized in the present historical life of all our churches. While in the Roman Catholic traditions primacy of the bishop of Rome is understood to be the guarantee and indispensable condition of communion between local churches, in the Oriental Orthodox traditions primacy arises out of the experience of communion, without the concept and practice of jurisdiction. In the Oriental Orthodox view primacy at different levels is consequential to communion within and between local churches. Although primacy may in turn pastorally nourish this existing communion, in the form of a ministry for unity it is not the condition of existence or criterion of authenticity of the communion among local churches.

The Roman primacy understands itself as a binding test of authentic ecclesial communion and it appears to the Oriental Orthodox to be of mainly jurisdictional character.

The traditional expressions used to qualify primacy in the Orthodox tradition like primacy of *honour*, primacy of *love* and primacy among *equals*—all pointing to the same reality—presuppose eucharistic communion and conciliar consensus as conditions. They do not suggest necessarily any jurisdictional character. Primacy can be the expression of conciliarity but not vice versa.

It is against the background of the tragedy of the division within the one Body of Christ and the untiring efforts of the churches to fulfil the will of Christ that “they may be one”, that the origin and history of the Oriental Catholic Churches have often to be seen. Without questioning the sincerity of the intentions of the persons involved, it is now possible to say that these efforts did not succeed to restore unity. On the contrary they led often to new divisions and to new sufferings.

Now that fraternal relations have been re-established between the Catholic Church and all of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, it is desirable that the Oriental Catholic Churches be integrated in this common search for unity.

Thus we are glad to see that in fact, the respective Oriental Catholic Churches have been fully involved in the official dialogue that the Catholic Church has initiated with the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Malankara Syrian

Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. Likewise we hope that similar dialogue may whenever possible, emerge with the other Oriental Orthodox Churches.

This integration of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the common search for unity is possible and profitable only if certain conditions are fulfilled. In the first place, every proselytism, every aim of expansion of one church at the expense of the other or every purpose of the passing of people of one church to another should be clearly eliminated. Pastoral, educational and social activities that involve faithful of the other church should not be undertaken without the knowledge, the approval and the cooperation of the authorities of that church. Moreover, the aim should be to come to a mutual consultation and collaboration beyond a mere peaceful living side by side.

We welcome fully the directives given by the church authorities in this sense, as well as the common principles and practical rules evolved in the dialogues between the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches, between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

It was stressed that the declarations of principles are not sufficient. Experience shows that there is often a wide gap between the texts and their implementation in the life of the Churches. First, it is of great importance that the principles agreed upon and the decisions taken at the level of authority are in fact communicated to the bishops, the priests and the faithful on all levels. Secondly, concrete ways and means should be explored, according to the different local circumstances, to promote a real change in mentality and attitude in the relations among our Churches. There is also hope that the Churches will be able to take concrete steps aiming to lift and to remove the feelings of suspicion of proselytism that weigh on them and hinder mutual trust. In certain places, the creation of joint local workgroups or commissions may be advisable in order to facilitate implementation and to evaluate the situation in common.

There is not only need for dialogue between the Churches of the East and West. There is perhaps still a greater need of dialogue between East (Oriental Orthodox) and East (Oriental Catholic) on the local level. Together they have the same history and the same tradition. They live side by side most of the time and are confronted with the same difficulties and challenges.

The fact that the Oriental Orthodox Churches and the respective Oriental Catholic Churches have a different and at times conflicting reading of their common history can cause misunderstanding and mistrust. Efforts for a common reading of history would therefore be very helpful to facilitate mutual acceptance and collaboration.

It is an encouraging sign that some Oriental Orthodox and Oriental Catholic Churches are already involved in dialogue and collaboration in the frame of national or regional ecumenical organizations, like for instance the Middle East Council of Churches.

It is not yet entirely clear what other role the Oriental Catholic Churches can play in the search for communion between East and West. In fact, it is



generally accepted that the present status of the Oriental Catholic Churches in the Catholic Communion is essentially of a provisional nature. That is clear as well from the texts of Vatican II as from the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (1991). Their present status cannot be a model of possible future relations between the Oriental Orthodox Churches and Rome in case of unity.

Nevertheless the Oriental Orthodox Churches do not remain unaffected in front of certain direct interventions of the authorities of Rome in the life of the Oriental Catholic Churches. Sometimes they are for them a cause of concern raising the question of liberty in the church, and whether a real respect for diversity in unity is concretely possible, because of the ways the Roman Primacy is being exercised. A more harmonious development in this field could help to dissipate certain apprehensions.

The Oriental Catholics think that they still have a role to play within the Catholic Church in the search for unity between East and West. Their presence in the Catholic Communion can help the Latin Church to discover in an even more concrete ways that she does not on her own represent the whole Christian tradition, that diversity exists and is an enrichment for the Church of Christ. In this way, they think that they have the task to open the Catholic Communion to the diversity of the East and to prepare it to welcome the Oriental churches and their traditions as authentic, rich and important.

At the conclusion of the Study Seminar some concrete suggestions were made for future study or action, in PRO ORIENTE or elsewhere, to facilitate a harmonious development of the relations between the Oriental Orthodox and the Oriental Catholic Churches in the search for full communion between the Catholic Church and the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches:

1. The method of organizing study seminars should also in the future be maintained, however there could be an introductory part in them, in order to reconsider those parts of previous Study Seminars, which treated similar subjects and strict chairing should prevent repetition of already studied problems.
2. As the problem of Primacy seems to be the most difficult of all, this subject should be approached from different sides in order to consider various approaches such as: Jurisdiction (episcopate, primacy and synod; distinction between the powers of ordination and jurisdiction); Local and Universal Church—ethnicity and Church; the Petrine office as seen in the Second Vatican Council; Infallibility of the Church.
3. Symposia of Church historians and teachers of history in Church seminars should be convened in view of a common reading of history.
4. Common research work on controversial questions, such as the origins of the Oriental Catholic Churches.
5. Study on not outspoken emotional reservations as a motivation to uphold division among Christians.
6. A common study of obstacles to unity on the local level, encouraging the dialogue between the Churches on the local level, especially by

establishing information flow (information service and exchange of documents to promote a better understanding of the other side).

7. Elaboration of hypothetical models of unity with a view on future ecumenical possibilities at least on the local level.

8. Working out of the best model of future union among the Churches with special attention on practical problems.

The visit of His Eminence Cardinal Hans. Hermann Groer at the last session of the Study Seminar was welcomed cordially by the participants. Words of greetings were exchanged by His Eminence and the chair. The presence of the Cardinal was regarded as a sign of encouragement for the ecumenical dialogue.

All the participants express their gratitude to PRO ORIENTE for this occasion of being together as brothers in the One Lord, working in the One Spirit for the Unity of the One Church to the Glory of the One Father.

## JOINT COMMUNIQUE

### of the PRO ORIENTE unofficial Consultation on the Theology of the Church of the East

In the last working session of the unofficial Consultation organized by the foundation PRO ORIENTE of Vienna on "Orthodoxy and Catholicity in the Syriac Tradition, with the Special Attention to the Theology of the Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire" on June 28, 1994, this Communique has been worked out in mutual agreement by all participants of the Consultation, which reads as follows:

In her quest to promote theological understanding and ecumenical relations among the apostolic Churches, PRO ORIENTE Foundation has invited to Vienna from June 24-29, 1994, participants from the Oriental Catholic churches (Chaldean, Syrian, Maronite, Malabar and Malankara) from the Oriental Orthodox churches (Syrian Orthodox from Antioch and Malankara Orthodox from India) and the Assyrian Church, namely all who share a common ecclesial heritage in the Syriac language and tradition. This is the first conference to include all the Syriac Churches mentioned.

Participants coming from twelve different church backgrounds and twelve nations, twelve bishops and a number of theologians, have come together for this purpose. Present there were also staff of PRO ORIENTE, expert scholars on the theology and the history of these Churches, a representative of the Middle East Council of Churches and an observer from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

This historic ecumenical initiative of PRO ORIENTE was most warmly welcomed by all participants who gratefully accepted the fraternal hospitality of the foundation. The presence of H. Em. Hans Hermann Cardinal Groer, Archbishop of Vienna, underlined the importance of the event and was met with respect and enthusiasm.



The subjects that were treated, were Christology, the history of the Church of the East in the Sasanian Empire and the Eucharistic Anaphoras of the Church of the East. These topics were treated by Assyrian and Chaldean participants and a number of international renowned experts.

The theological papers dealt with the main topics:

1. The Christology of the Synods of the Church of the East under the Sasanian Empire, and of Bawai the Great's "Book on the Union", with special attention paid to the various understandings of the key Christological terms (in particular *qnoma*) current in the 5th-6th centuries. Here it was made very clear how different understandings of the meanings of these terms had led to verbally conflicting Christological statements.

2. The context and the different stages by which the Church of the East came to adopt a distinctive *qnomi*c terminology.

3. The Christology of Nestorius and the problems of its interpretation.

4. The Vienna Christological Statement from the point of view of the Assyrian Church of the East.

Finally, there was a call for the further and common exploration of the different Christological traditions, especially the traditions of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius of Constantinople.

In the historical papers special attention was paid to two specific areas:

- 1) The early history of the Assyro-Chaldean Church of the East, from the 1st to the 7th centuries; and

- 2) The expansion of this church across Asia, as far as China, in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.. Of particular relevance to the theme of the Consultation is the fact that the Assyro-Chaldean Church of the East was located to the east of and so outside the Roman Empire, with the important consequence that it was never directly involved in the Church Councils convened by the Roman Emperor within the Roman Empire. In the case of the Council of Nicea (325), however its creed and canons were subsequently officially accepted at the synod of Seleucia-Ktesiphon (410).

Two papers, on the anaphoras used by the Church of the East have been presented to the Consultation. Both focused on the issue of the absence of the Institution Narrative in the extant manuscripts containing the text of the anaphora of Addai and Mari. One paper dealt with the subject matter from the standpoint of the history of liturgy, the other from the biblical and patristic point of view.

Similar conclusions were reached; that the anaphora of Addai and Mari, as it stands in the manuscripts is an authentic anaphora of early christianity, close to the primordial patterns of the Eucharistic prayer, and therefore quite valid as a consecrative liturgy, even in the context of Catholic theology.

We, as Christians, seek to be united in a spirit of brotherhood in our faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, God and Savior. Thus, we recognize our

christian duty to strive through prayer and dialogue towards reconciliation until Christ's wish to his church One (John 17, 21) is brought to a perfect and complete realization.

We have all endeavoured for a deeper understanding of the pre-Ephesian, non-Chalcedonian, and Chalcedonian Christologies which have separated us until now.

Although we see that there are differences in the theological interpretation of the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ because of our different theological traditions, we were able to recognize the fact that we, in our common faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ, regard his mystery to be inexhaustible and ineffable, and for the human mind never fully comprehensible or expressible. For this reason, we, at this consultation have started to discuss and further explore the principle of various theological expressions in the one Faith.

But realizing that there are still different emphases in the theological and dogmatic elaboration of Christ's mystery, we wish to encourage common efforts for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of our different Christologies in harmony with our different theological traditions. We are convinced, however, that these different Christological formulations on all sides need to be discussed in order to clarify further the teaching of the Council of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451).

To continue this understanding, participants in the consultation have agreed to form a Follow-up Commission consisting of one representative from each church tradition. The task of this commission will be to plan future consultations, symposia, publications, etc., and to develop the appropriate procedures and methods.

We recommend that PRO ORIENTE invites members of the Assyrian Church of the East to attend the forthcoming PRO ORIENTE regional symposia, as part of the effort to promote further contacts and collaboration with the Assyrian Church of the East.

The participants have also decided that an unofficial tri-lateral dialogue of PRO ORIENTE on issues of common concern for the three ecclesial traditions of the Oriental Catholic, Oriental Orthodox and Assyrian Church of the East should be organized. For the first dialogue round the topic will be on Christology.

In conclusion, we commonly submit ourselves to the witness of the Holy Scriptures and thus to the Apostolic Kerygma and express our intention not be become weary in the search for a common language concerning the mystery of salvation in our Lord in a fraternal spirit "...until we attain to the unity of faith and to the knowledge of God's Son..." (Eph 4, 13). We wish to see the mystery of the compassion of God reflected in our enhanced life of Christian compassion.

All of us have experienced how fruitful this Consultation has been, and we pray that God who brought us together may bless us and guide our future efforts in such a way that one day we are all united in one communion of faith and love.



## Book Reviews

**N. A. Thomas Nangachiveettil**, *Asiayile Marthomasabhakal*, I (TVM. 1982, xxiv + 574, Rs 45) II (TVM. 1985, xiii + 790, Rs 80), Published by the author, Jaya Matha Bhavan, I Law College Road, Trivandrum, 695033, Kerala, India.

This comprehensive scholarly book by Dr. Nagachiveettil (+ Sept. 1985) opens new horizons for the students of the history of the Churches founded by St. Thomas. Some people recently propagate that the Church of the Thomas Christians is a very small insignificant Church limited to the southernmost part of India. Some call into question the authentic indianness of this ancient apostolic church founded by one of the first disciples of Christ. Some may even go a step further in branding it as foreign, having no real missionary orientation and evangelical enthusiasm, as a church which has to be merged into the "universal" latin church, as a church tolerated for some more time and so on. In other words, in India there is a systematic propaganda by some against the ancient apostolic church. Even the very members of this church seem to care nothing of the traditions of this church. When Fr. Nangachiveettil saw that the very existence of his mother church and its organic growth are threatened, he began to make research in the field and he revealed to us in his very scholarly work a mine of information regarding the churches founded by St. Thomas. He proved sufficiently and convincingly based on authentic documents that there existed once the Thomas Churches in Persia, China, Mongolia, Tibet, Central Asia, Siam, Indonesia, Burma, Arabia, Socotra, Sind, various parts of India, Ceylon, Laccodivees, and so on. There is detailed description on the activity of St. Thomas in South India and the churches he had founded there. It leads the author to the early history of Kerala, its early inhabitants, early commercial relations, early reference of Christianity by the various travellers etc.

Vol. II deals with the period between the arrival of the Portuguese and the present day. It depicts colorfully the various divisions in the St. Thomas Church in Malabar. When the first vol. was published the Catholic Congress award was conferred on the author. The author got also the Gold medal from Navajeevaparished. But after the publication of the second volume the author did not live long to receive the various awards.

This is a monumental work on the St. Thomas churches in Asia. It will outlive the vicissitudes of time and will open new horizons for the future. Generations will remember Rev. Dr. N. A. Thomas with gratitude for his selfless service in writing and publishing this outstanding scholarly work.

**Fr. G. Chediath**

**Irenee Hausherr**, *Penthos: The Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East*, tr. by A. Hufstader (Cistercian Studies Series, 53), Kalamazoo 1982, p. x + 200 (no price given).

Fr. Hausher published his work, "La doctrine de componction dans l'Orient Chrétien", in 1944. And it took 38 years to have an English translation of this very important book. Hufstader has done a great service in translating it for the English speaking readers. Penthos is heartfelt componction. It is "the deep awareness of sin which comes upon the Christian when he realizes that his own sins cut him off from the fulness of God's presence. It is the godly sorrow which accompanies the life-long knowledge that he is deprived of the complete and utter joy which God offers." In this book the author is explaining the Eastern concept of Penthos to the Western readers. He analyses the sources, causes and effects of Penthos; he invites them to the means to Penthos and shows the obstacles to it. The effects are purification and beatitude. It is a very useful work—to know, to appreciate and to imitate the early Christian ascetics.

**Fr. G. Chediath**

**Nikolaus Wyrwoll** (ed.), *Orthodoxia 1986–1987* (Ostkirchliches Institut, Regensburg), 1986, p. 198 (no price given).

This very important handbook supplies "the names of those bishops who do in fact belong to one of the Orthodox Churches along with their proper titles and addresses." "This was first published in 1982 and it is updated in every two years. The present one is the third edition. It helps the Churches to know one another and also to avoid" 'vagantes' bishops who assume dubious titles of Orthodox Churches and issue decrees in the name of these Churches." The book has four indexes: The list of the Orthodox Churches and the abbreviations used in the book (p. 13), Index of Names, Index of Places, and Index of Dioceses. It gives also an introduction in twelve languages.

**Fr. G. Chediath**

**Besa**, *The Life of Shenoute*, introduction, translation and notes by D. N. Bell (Cistercian Publications), kalamazoo, 1983.

This booklet contains the English translation of the life of Shenoute of Atripe, written by his disciple Besa in Sahidic (Coptic). Shenoute was a great monastic Father like Aba Antony and Aba Pachomios. But he is very little known in the Christian world. Not much is written about him and his virtues. In the Coptic tradition, he is a hero of faith; but in the Graeco-Roman world he is an unknown monastic father. He was the leader of thousands of monks and nuns. He led the monks of the White Monastery to the heights of sanctity. We find Shenoute at Ephesus with St. Cyril as his "body guard."

Besa presents Shenoute as a wonderworker: travelling through the air, knowing the minds and thought of others, curing the sick; he is another Elijah for him. Besa narrates that Shenoute walked with Christ, and he received visitation from Old Testament Saints.

Palladius, however, in his Lausiac History does not mention him. Nor is he remembered in the conferences of Cassian. No saying is extant



from Shenoute in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. It is strange that he is not in the "*Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*." Still he was a great monastic Father and is held in high esteem in the whole Coptic tradition.

Shenoute was a learned man who knew both Sahidic and Greek. His history was written in the Coptic tongue. He was a Copt and his monastery was Coptic and his writings survived in Coptic. So the hellenistic world failed to take him seriously. But it is Shenoute who was primarily responsible for the development of Coptic literature.

Besa's life history was later translated into Bohairic (Coptic) in the later middle ages and into Arabic.

Fr. G. Chediath

**Peter Day.** *The Liturgical Dictionary of Eastern Christianity*, Turnbridge Wells, Kent: Burns & Oates / Search Press Ltd, 1993, 334 pp., hardbound £ 27.50

The author who is a member of the Russian Orthodox Church published in Dublin in 1972 the book *Eastern Christian Liturgies: The Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian and Syrian Rites. Eucharistic Rites with Introductory Notes and Rubrical Instructions*. It is out of print since long. The present work is certainly a laudable and meritorious achievement, for it is the first attempt to give the student of eastern and oriental liturgies a useful and practical tool at hand. It takes into consideration the liturgies of all the churches of oriental tradition. Its editor is relying on different, modern and ancient, authors. The main part is devoted to the terms used in the different churches. This is why the author adds often also the liturgical family. Here, however, the user of this dictionary may get confused, if he is not an outspoken specialist. We are finding indications as e.g. *Syrian, Syro-Jacobite, West Syrian, Maronite*, for terms used in all the churches of the Syro-Antiochene family. Another shortcoming is that the work does not take into consideration liturgical reforms of the recent past delatinizing e.g. the liturgies of the Maronite and Armenian churches respectively. What is said about the *Maronite liturgy* (p. 181) is completely out of date. The author deemed it useful to publish entries also on the history of different churches. These necessarily remain unsatisfactory, as they do not consider the most recent history as the revival of the Romanian and the Ukrainian Catholic Churches. Going through the different parts of the book, we have found a number of inaccuracies. So (p. 10) it is said that usually west syrian churches have got but one altar; nothing is said on the two 'side altars' used for simultaneous celebrations on solemn occasions. At the entry *asterisk* of the Byzantine rite, there is no reference to the corresponding West Syriac *kaukbo*. It is somehow obsolete to continue speaking today of Rites when individual Churches are meant, e.g. 'Catholics of the Chaldean rite' (p. 29) or even 'East Syrian rite of the Roman (sic!) Catholic Church' (p. 49). We sought, in vain, to find some notes on the East Syrian *bema*. Only that of the Byzantine tradition is given consideration (p. 35). It is somehow strange to find the Syro-oriental baptistery described as *Bit Qanki* (p. 37) instead of *Beth A'madha*. In the Melkite Church, communion is nowadays generally given by intinction, so also in the Hellenic Catholic Church in Greece (p. 55). The *deaconess* (p. 66) is not a chalice; the correct description is given at the entry '*M'sham-Shonoitho*' (p. 203). Regarding the *eskhimo* (p. 92), it should be added that non-Catholic Syrian ("Syro-Jacobite") and all Malankara bishops use this with golden crosses for the divine liturgy. The *Italo-Greek Catholics* (p. 130) do not have the

Filioque phrase in the Creed (as Catholic Greek-Hellenic, Russian and Syro-Malankara Churches). It cannot be asserted nowadays that »Jacobites ... deny the two natures in Christ« (p. 133). On p. 282 it is rightly noted that, in July 1984, the Catholic and the Syrian Orthodox Churches affirm a common christological faith (which the joint Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Theological Commission did in 1993, too). The *Kadishat Aloho* (p. 135) is not a property of the Maronite liturgy, but the Syro-Antiochene christological Trisagion (p. 292-294) which is sung with insertions (today also by the Maronites). The *Kurepiskupo* (p. 154) or Corepiskupo (Corepiscopa) is known not only in the Maronite Church, but also in the churches of Antiochene or Syro-oriental tradition. It is today rather a prelatial honour than an office like that of the Sa'aure (deans, episcopal visitors or vicars). Syro-Oriental Catholics and non-Catholics are both using the same liturgical language (p. 172), Syriac with eastern pronunciation or 'Chaldaic'. A *Mafrian* (p. 177) is not the patriarch's vicar general, but the head of the episcopal synod outside the traditional territory of the Syrian Patriarchate of Antioch. The mafrian's privilege is to enthrone a newly elected patriarch. The *Malabar rite Catholics* (sic) do not use the liturgy as revised by the Synod of Diamper in 1599 (p. 178). The author is not aware of the liturgical development in this century. It seems to be also very particular to incorporate the Malankara Christians, Catholics and non-Catholics, among the *Malabarese Christians* (p. 178; see also p. 283). There is no entry *Malankara* in the book. In the Orthodox Church of *Poland* (p. 235), Church-Slavonic with Russian pronunciation is normally used for the liturgy, while wider use of Polish for sermons is now getting shape. It is somehow not familiar to read *Proem* (p. 240) instead of the Proemion or *frumyon* by which the sedro is introduced. The term *protos* (p. 244) is not only the designation of the Athonite chairman of the governing committee, but can also be applied to the primate of an autocephalous Orthodox or *sui iuris* Catholic Church (patriarch, major archbishop, metropolitan). *Qashisho* is not only the designation of a Maronite priest (p. 247), but of any Syriac priest (*Qashisha* in East Syriac). *Rambans* (p. 251) are not "solitary or eremitical religious" among the Syro-Malankarese, but almost exclusively bishops-elect who join the monastic rule of St. Anthony before being raised to the episcopate. *Raza* (p. 252) is not simply a solemn celebration, but the most solemn celebration of the Liturgy of the (Syro-Malabar) Thomas Christians of Syro-oriental tradition. What is said about the *Ruthenian* (liturgical) *rite* (p. 259), is almost entirely obsolete now, in the entry *Shabbuqlo*, the word "bishop" (line 8) should be replaced by "archdeacon". The cross that embroiders the *paina* in the *Syro-Malabar rite* (p. 283) is not a Greek cross, but the so-called Thomas Cross or "Persian cross". It is also not correct to say that the Roman liturgical calendar is used in it. There is no more a "Yugoslav rite"; the *Annuario Pontificio* has been speaking since 1993 of the "Byzantine Church of Krizevci". These inexactitudes to which we have pointed do not have the aim at diminishing the worth of the book as a whole. It will certainly enrich every library. Excellent are the parts at the end: A quick reference guide; comparative table of [monastic] habits (Byzantine); comparative table of Hours; summary of Byzantine liturgical books; table of liturgical languages (here, erroneously the Syro-Malankarese instead of the Syro-Malabarians are listed among the Chaldean [East Syrian] Rite; the Malankara are mentioned in the right place); comparative table of sacraments; table of vestments.

John Madey



# News

## 1. Anglicans move to the Orthodox Church

Some priests and the laity are unsatisfied with the decision of the Anglian church to ordain women to the priesthood. Showing their protest some of them have moved to the Orthodox Church.

## 2. Jordan and Vatican move towards diplomatic relation.

Both Vatican and Jordan are moving to the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. This will help the catholic population of Jordan. There are about 60,000 Latin and Greek Melchite Catholics in Jordan.

## 3. Bp. Mar Sebastian Mankuzhikary dies.

His Excellency Mar Sebastian Mankuzhikary, bishop of Thamarassery, one of the eparchies of the Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal Church, died on 11 June 1994. He was 65. The late bishop was first the auxiliary bishop at Ernakulam Archdiocese for a long period. After the death of Cardinal Parecattil he became the Administrator of the Archdiocese and after the erection of the diocese of Thamarassery he became its first bishop. He was an orator, philosopher, theologian and an efficient administrator. He was the chairman of the liturgical committee for the Syro-Malabar Church.

## 4. Bp. William Jacquintha dies

Bp. William Jacquintha, the founder of 3 secular Institutes died in Rome on 15 June 1994. He was 85. The Spirituality Centre functioning at Manganam near Kottayam, Kerala, India was founded by him. The three groups of Apostolic Oblates, Social Animators and Apostolic Companions for sisters, laity and the priests respectively are doing their apostolates there. The late bishop was born in Cicily and became the bishop of Tivoli near Rome. The society of Apostolic Oblates was founded in 1950. Now various societies do their apostolates in different parts of the world.

## 5. Archbishop Mar Gregorios of Trivandrum dies

His Grace Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios, the Metropolitan of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church and the archbishop of Trivandrum died on 10 October 1994. He was 78.

He was ordained priest on 24 August 1944 and on 24 January 1953 he was consecrated Bishop and succeeded Mar Ivanios the first Metropolitan of Trivandrum in 1955. He could celebrate the Golden Jubilee of his Priestly Ordination just a few weeks before death. He served the Archdiocese and the Malankara church in particular and the Universal church for 42 years as a bishop. He was a charismatic personality that attracted people of all walks of life and of all religions. He was a man of joy and confidence who could radiate

joy to others around him. He was the President of CBCI and KCBC. His service was not limited strictly to the religious sphere but it extended to the political, social, cultural, economic, and agricultural spheres also. He was a lover of nature who could create interest among the people for modern cultivation, cheap construction of buildings for the poor etc.

With his death, which came all on a sudden, the Malankara Church in particular and the Indian Church and Universal church in general has lost a leader.

#### **6. Pontifical Commission for Liturgy**

A seven member Pontifical Commission has been constituted by Rome to study the proposals on liturgy sent by the Synod of Syro-Malabar Archiepiscopal church to Rome. The members are: Dr. Pierre Yousif, Dr. Thomas Cari, Dr. Robert Taft, Dr. Luke Vithuvattickal CMI, Prof. Federici, Dr. G. Kollamparampil and Dr. Neen. The Commission will evaluate the proposals from the genuine oriental liturgical perspective and give its opinion to the Congregation.

#### **7. Mar Kavukatt venerable servant of God**

His Grace Mar Matthew Kavukatt the late archbishop of the Syro-Malabar archdiocese of Changanacherry has been declared **servant of God**. The declaration, the first step to towards the Canonization process was made by His Grace Mar Joseph Powathil, the archbishop of Changanacherry, on 25 September 1964. Mar Kavukatt died on 9 October 1969.

#### **8. Major Archiepiscopal Tribunal formed.**

The Pontifical Delegate to the Syro-Malabar Church, Mar Abraham Kattumana, has formed the Supreme Tribunal of the Syro-Malabar Church. This gives the Church the privilege to judge the cases until now sent to Rome.

#### **9. Ninth Synod of Bishops**

The ninth Synod of Bishops assembled in Rome in October 1994 discussed the consecrated life. His Eminence Cardinal Antony Padiyara, His Grace Mar Joseph Powathil, His Grace Mar Abraham Kattumana and Rev. Dr. Thomas Mampra CMI participated in the Synod from Kerala.



## INDEX

1994 Vol. XV

March, No. 1

### Ecclesiology

The Thoma Marga: Icon of the Indo-Oriental Identity of the  
Thomas Christians of India  
*Sr. Prasanna Vazheparambil p. 3*

The Persian Crosses in India are Christian, not Manichean  
*Rev. Dr. Jacob Kollaparambil p. 24*

Church as the Meeting place of Liturgy and Theology  
*Rev. Dr. Joseph Kallarangatt p. 36*

June - September, No. 2, 3

### Liturgy - Spirituality

Documents on the Syro-Malabar Liturgical Reform, Congregation for  
Oriental Churches, Rome *p. 58*

Some Liturgical Principles Forgotten by the So-called Syro-Malabar  
Church  
*Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar p. 151*

December, No. 4

### Ecumenism

Christ and Christians: An Ecclesiological Theme in Ephrem  
*Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar p. 163*

Ecumenical Involvement of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church  
*Rev. George Mathew p. 170*

Exile and Home-Coming of the Oriental Catholics in India  
*George Kaniarakath CMI p. 181*

Thoughts on Ecumenism with Special Reference to  
Syrian Orthodox Stand Point  
*Rev. Dr. Adai Jacob p. 185*

Documentations *p. 191*

## OIRSI Publications, Recent Books

149. Sr. Serena, *Religious Life as Imitation of Christ*, 1991, P. 112, Rs. 20/-
150. C. Payngot (ed), *Homage to Mar Cariattil*, 1992, P. 217, Rs. 60/-
151. G. Chediath *Latin Sabhapithakanmar*, 1992, P. VIII+272, Rs. 30/- (M)
152. G. Chediath, (ed), *Jerome - Jennadius, Mahat-Vyaktikal*, 1992,  
P. XII + 140 Rs. 17/- (M)
153. Fr. John Kunnappally, *Mar Aprem Malpan*, 1992, P. XXI + 267,  
Rs. 45/- (M)
154. The Code of Canons for the Oriental Churches, 1992,  
P. XVII+790 Rs. 200/-
155. T. Mannooramparampil, *The Sacramental Commentaries of  
Fathers, (Qudasabhashyngal)*, 1992, P. 230, Rs. 35/- (M)
156. T. Mannooramparampil,  
*Aradhanakramathinu Amugham*, 1992 P. 172, Rs. 22/- (M)
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